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Dora Darling;the daughter of the regimen



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OLD PIC AND DORA WATCHING THE BATTLE.

DORA DARLING:

THE

DAUGHTER OF THE REGIMENT.

BOSTON:

J. E. TILTON AND COMPANY.

1866.

Entered, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1864, by
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DORA DARLING:

THE DAUGHTER OF THE REGIMENT

CHAPTER I.

“Hi! Dat good un! Bully for de ’federates, dis chile say. Dey’s showed deyse’fs out now! Cut um stick in de night, eh, an’ put! Jes’ like de wicked flea in de Bible dat no one wan’t a tryin’ fer to catch. Golly, I wish I’d got de rebel flea ’tween dis yer finger an’ fum! Wouldn’ I crack um ’bout de shortes’? An’ de Yankees got dar umformation from a ’telligent conterban’, did dey? Wish’t I know’d dat ’telligent feller! I’d like ’o shake um paw, an’ gib um a chaw ob ole Varginny for de sarvice he done to ebery nigger in de Souf w’en he help de Yankees. Wish’t I was in his brogans,—reckon dey wouldn’ fin’ no ’telligenter nor no willin’er conterban’ dan ole Pic ud make ef he got de chance fer ter show um sentermen’s; but de trouble wid dis yer nigger is, him candle’s got a bushel basket atop ob um, an’ de Bible

hese'f say dat dat ar' ain't no kin' ob a fashion. Bud ef de Yankees 'ud come an' kick off de ole basket — golly, what a confurgation o' smartness 'ud bust on dey eyesight!"

"Then you believe in the Yankees, Pic, and would like to help them?" said a low voice.

"O Lordy, what dat? Golly, mas'r, whar be you? Hebenly Marster, I's a gone goose now! I warn't on'y funnin', mas'r; kin' o' makin' b'lieve, yer know!" stammered the negro, springing from the feeding-trough, where he was sitting, and hastily cramming the torn newspaper he had been reading into the pocket of his Osnaburgs.

"Whar be you, den, any way, mas'r?" continued he, a little more stoutly, as his great eyes, rolling wildly from floor to scaffold, from scaffold to beam, and thence into the very pitch of the roof, failed to discover any occupant of the room besides himself and Dolly the cow.

"Wha' was it?" continued he in a lower tone, as his first demand remained unanswered. "'Tain't de time o' day for ghos'esses nor brownies; dey all takin' dey morn in' nap, an' sleepin' off dey night's doin's. Mabbe 'twas ole Nick hese'f, on'y I 'spected he wor too busy takin' care o' de 'federacy to bodder he horns 'bout one ole nigger like dis yer."

"No; he has a little time left for you, Pic," returned the same sepulchral voice, although the speaker still remained invisible.

"I's powerful sorry to hear dat ar news," retorted the negro, recovering a little of his native audacity through the very extremity of his terror.

"We was in hopes, now he'd got dis new handle ter work wid, he wor gwine to let de niggers alone, an' let 'um try to he'p deyse'fs out o' de fix he's got 'um inter."

"It isn't old Nick's way to let go when he has once got hold, Pic. But don't you want to see him? Shut your eyes, and say, 'Raw-head-and-bloody-bones, fee-faw-fum' three times, and then look up in the mow just over your own head."

Picter, closing his eyes, repeated the formula to the best of his ability, and then, opening them to twice their usual size, rolled them toward the designated locality.

Peering over the edge of the hay appeared a white and ghastly face, blood-stained and haggard, and closely swathed in a white bandage. The expression was preternaturally severe and solemn.

"Well, Pic, and what do you think of me?" inquired the apparition, after a considerable pause.

"Golly, mas'r! I tink you isn' so brack as you's painted!" ejaculated Pic, adding, with more assurance, "An' I might ha' know'd you wasn', cause it say so in de Bible."

The grim visage suddenly relaxed into a hearty laugh.

"Bravo, Pic! I've always heard 'the devil isn't as black as he's painted,' but I never heard Scripture author-

ity for it before. But now tell me, good fellow," continued the mysterious speaker, with some return of anxiety in his voice, "can anybody overhear me but yourself?"

"W'y, mas'r, dat hard question fer ter answer," said Pic, dubiously, while his wild eyes once more roamed about the barn. "I t'ou't I was all 'lone jes' now, w'en I sot down fer look inter de paper jes' a lilly minit."

"And never knew I was listening to the whole story, Pic?" put in the voice, more joyously. "Well, as far as I know, there is no one else here."

"'Less you's brung you sarvents 'long wid you," suspiciously suggested Pic. "S'pose dey's put dey bodies in dey trousers' pockets jes' now, au' is unwise."

"O, my imps! Well, I'll promise they shan't trouble you as long as you're a good Union man."

"Dis yer de Sou'fern 'Federacy, mas'r," said Pic cautiously; for, as his belief in the stranger's human character increased, his fears of him, as a possible spy, returned.

"I know that, you cunning old darkey, and I know, too, your way of feeling about it. Didn't I just hear your opinion of the result of our fight at Carnifex Ferry the other day? and wasn't you just envying the contraband who showed us the way through those confounded mountain passes? Well, here's an opportunity for you to rival him. I am a federal officer, wounded, and taken prisoner at this very battle of Carnifex Ferry. I

made my escape the second day after I was taken; but I've lost my way, and wandered among the mountains here for a week, I should think, until I'm starved, and footsore, and used up generally. Last night I crept in here for a sleep in your master's haymow; and just now, after hearing you express your sentiments upon war matters so frankly, it occurred to me you might like to help me along a little. Should you mind, for instance, letting me drink out of that pail of milk? I tried to get some from the cow in the night; but I am afraid my education in milking was neglected, for I couldn't get a drop, and had to put up with a kick instead."

Pic turned and looked reproachfully at Dolly. "Now I alluz suspicioned dat ar' cow wor a kin' ob a rebel beast," said he. "Dere ain't no surer way fer to make her ugly w'en you's a milkin' dan ter whistle Yankee Doodle; bud ef yer pipe up Dixie, she'll let down as good as gole. T'oder night I got so mad I licked her wid thirteen stripes, an' den gib her thirteen punches wid a hoe-handle, ter go fer stars; but I don' see as it done any good."

"You must try compromise, I'm afraid, Pic. But now come up here, and we'll consult a little."

While Pic clambers laboriously into the haymow, we will cross the irregular space between the barn and the rambling old farm-house to which it belonged, and make some acquaintance with its inmates.

The level rays of the morning sun, crowding through the one eastern window, deluged the wide kitchen with light, danced a little scornfully among the coarse breakfast service upon the table, rioted gleefully in and out of Dora's chestnut curls, as she knelt upon the hearth carefully stirring the contents of the saucepan, and rested at last with a loving radiance upon the pale fingers and smooth, thin locks of the invalid who reclined upon the couch beside the fire.

"There, mother," said the girl, as she started to her feet, and carried the saucepan to the sink, "I reckon you'll say your gruel is first rate to-day. There ain't a lump in it."

"You're a darling little nurse, Dora," said Mrs. Darley, while her eyes rested lovingly upon the straight, firm figure and noble head of her daughter.

"Only twelve years old, but almost a woman for strength and handiness," murmured she, thoughtfully.

"What's that, mother?" asked Dora from the other end of the room.

"Where did father and Tom go, Dora?" asked the mother, faintly.

"Father went to mill with Whitefoot, and Tom went up to the wood-lot with the oxen, to fetch home some wood, — we've hardly a stick, — and Pic has got to reap all day; we couldn't spare him, any way."

"When will Tom come home?" inquired Mrs. Darley, a little anxiously.

“Not till night, I expect. It’s a good distance, and the oxen won’t hurry much, you know. He took a luncheon with him.”

“I’m sorry,” murmured the invalid.

“Why, mother? Do you want to see Tom?”

“Not just now; but I don’t like to have him away from home so far. I feel as if you’d ought to know, my dear little girl, that your mother is going to leave you. My strength fails all the time, and to-day I feel very low. I can’t tell just when it’s coming, Dora; but I know it will be soon; and I must bid you all good by first, or I couldn’t go happy.”

“Mother!” burst from the girl’s lips, as she came hastily to her side, and knelt to meet the offered embrace.

In a few moments, however, the self-restraint that circumstances had imposed upon the child’s habit until it had become second nature, asserted itself, and Dora gently extricated herself from her mother’s arms, and rose to her feet, saying,—

“You’ll feel stronger, mammy dear, when you’ve had something to eat. I’ll bring the gruel.”

Then, after she had placed a chair and a pillow at her mother’s back, she brought the little tray, covered with a damask napkin, and holding the one china cup and silver spoon of the meagre household. Dora waited silently until the invalid began to sip the delicate gruel with apparent relish, and then she walked away to the win-

dow. In vain the gay sunshine beat upon the face now turned toward it. A deadly pallor had killed the roses on cheek and lip, and in the steadfast gray eyes lay a depth of unchildish sorrow that no sunlight could soften into soothing tears. This strange child, who never complained and almost never wept, concealed a capacity of suffering beneath that quiet exterior, unknown even to the dying mother, who built so hopefully upon the undue maturity of her darling's nature.

Dora, fighting desperately with this terrible new grief that had so suddenly fallen upon her, did not notice, although her eyes mechanically rested upon him, the uncouth figure of a man, who, while limping across the yard, vainly sought to attract her notice, and beckon her to the outside of the house. This man was a middle-aged negro, intensely black, and most curiously misshapen,—his right leg being an inch or more shorter than the other, while the shoulder upon the same side of his body was as much higher than the left, and all the features on the right side of his face were comically twisted upward. In fact, the idea suggested by the whole figure was, that some giant, in a playful mood, had seized it by the two feet, and, while pulling the left one down, had pushed the right one up, giving an upward tendency to that whole side of the body.

This strange being was named Epictetus; but this name, too long for common use, had been shortened into

Picter, and occasionally Pic. He was the sole retainer of the house of Darley, and clung to its decaying fortunes with the tenacity of his race and temperament.

Just now he was particularly desirous of a moment's conversation with his young mistress before entering the house; but, finding it impossible to attract her notice, he limped on to the back door, and presently entered the kitchen.

Dora, aroused by the click of the heavy latch, came immediately to meet him, anxious to prevent his disturbing her mother with questions or complaints; for Mrs. Darley had steadfastly stood between the slave and many a threatened injustice or cruelty on his master's part.

"What is it, Picter?" asked Dora, softly.

"O, Missy Dora, honey, what's you s'pose we's gwine to do 'bout dis yer bizness?"

"What is it — what's the matter, Picter?"

"W'y, here's dis yer feller — wait now, lemme go ax mist's 'bout it. She'll fix um better nor de Queen o' Sheby could."

"Well, there she is; but don't plague her about anything that can be helped, Uncle Pic, for she's not so well to-day."

With these words, Dora abruptly turned away, and began to clear the table, her lips assuming a painful compression.

Picter pulled off his old straw hat, and coming close

up to his mistress's couch, bent down and began to speak to her in a low, agitated voice. As he proceeded, Mrs. Darley also became moved, and presently called,—

“Dora!”

Dora came directly, and stood beside her mother, smoothing her hair, and glancing rather reproachfully at Pictor, who had disturbed her thus.

“Dora, Pictor says that there is a poor, wounded Union soldier in the barn, who has got away from some of the rebels, who had taken him prisoner, and is trying to get back to his regiment. He hid himself in our barn last night, and meant to stay there all day, but Pictor found him. He is very hungry and tired, and his wound has never been done up, or anything. Isn't it dreadful, Dora?”

“Yes, mother,” said the girl, in a low voice, while her eyes brightened, and the color deepened on her cheek.

“But, mother, ain't you glad he came to us instead of anywhere else about here?”

“Yes, dear child, we will do our very best for him; I knew you would feel so,” said Mrs. Darley, answering the meaning rather than the words of her daughter's remark. “But you know,” added she, hesitatingly, “father doesn't feel as we do about the war.”

Dora paused a moment, and then said, decidedly,—

“Well, mother, I feel the way you do about everything, and the way you feel, is the right way.”

Mrs. Darley looked relieved. She was not a strong woman, either of body or mind, and this was by no means the first time she had indirectly asked counsel of her little daughter in the troubles that beset her life.

"Then, Pieter," said she, joyfully, "you may go and bring him in."

"I know'd you'd say it, mist's!" exclaimed the negro, joyfully, as he stumped away through the back door.

"Now, Dora, go to my lower bureau-drawer, and get that bundle of old linen at the right-hand end, and bring the bottle of liniment from the cupboard. Now pour some warm water into the wash-basin, and put it in the sink, and bring a fine towel."

"All ready, mother."

"Smart girl! Well, next you may get him some breakfast. Make a little fresh tea, and set out the cold meat, and some bread and butter. Then boil a couple of fresh eggs. Here he comes."

The door opened, and Pieter stood aside to allow the stranger to enter first.

He was a tall, slender young man, or rather lad, for he was but a little more than twenty years of age, with a face that might be handsome, but was just now too pale, and haggard, and blood-stained, for beauty. The fair hair, too, was clotted and stiffened with blood, and the white handkerchief bound about his head was soaked with it. He wore the uniform of a federal officer; but every garment was torn, soiled, and battle-stained.

Mrs. Darley uttered a cry of dismay and pity. Dora stood still and looked at him as she had looked at the sun a half hour before. The young man advanced painfully, but without embarrassment, to Mrs. Darley's couch.

"You are very good, madam," said he, "to send for me. I only asked some food, and leave to rest through the day in your barn."

"We would not leave you there. I have a son myself. He may some day be in your case."

"In the same good cause?" asked the soldier, with animation.

Mrs. Darley shook her head sadly.

"I am afraid not. The border states are full of divided households. The old Scripture curse has come upon us."

"Pardon me," said the young man, faintly, as he sank into the chair offered by Pictet. "It is very hard upon you who lie as it were between the two armies."

"God only knows how hard," said Mrs. Darley, mournfully. "But," added she, immediately, "I am forgetting all that I ought to remember first. There is some water and a towel. You had better sit down, and let my little girl take that handkerchief off your head, and then, after you have bathed it, she will do it up with some liniment. I am sure it will feel better for it. Then you must have a good breakfast, and after that you had better go to bed up stairs, and try to sleep till night. After dark Pictet will show you the road North, or wherever you want to go."

The young man rose, and held out his hand to the kind woman who thus endangered her own prosperity, perhaps her life even, for a stranger and for his cause.

“I cannot thank you as I ought for this kindness,” said he, in a broken voice. “But, if I ever see my mother again, I shall tell her of you, and she shall thank you as only she can. She would do as you are doing.”

“Some time perhaps she will,” said the invalid, feebly. “Now, Dora, come and help the gentleman. She can remove the bandage better than you can, sir, because she can see it.”

In a short time, by the help of plenty of warm water, soap, and a towel, the young stranger presented a much less ghastly appearance; and when Dora had deftly bound on the cool, clean bandage, soaked in healing liniment, he declared that he felt himself a different man.

“Sit down now and eat,” said Mrs. Darley, smiling. “Pieter, you must go and keep watch round the house, and if you see any one coming, let us know. Dora, pour some tea for — what shall we call you, sir?”

“They call me Captain Karl at home,” said the young man, laughing; “and perhaps I had better not tell you any more of my name. So, if you are questioned about me by my true title, you can say you never heard it.”

“Then, Captain Karl, sit down at the table, and help yourself. I’m sorry we’ve nothing better to offer.”

CHAPTER II.

PICTER, detailed by his mistress as a scout, went about the duty somewhat unwillingly. He would have preferred to lurk in the farther end of the great kitchen, and feast his eyes and ears with the presence of the federal soldier, whom he looked upon as in a large degree his own property by right of discovery.

He found reason, however, to congratulate himself upon his prompt obedience, when, in limping across the yard toward the barn, he met a lank, ill-looking fellow, by name Joe Sykes, coming out of it.

This Sykes was one of Mr. Darley's nearest neighbors, and one of the bitterest rebels in the whole South. He was also, as Picter well knew, a hard and cruel master to his negroes and his family, and was consequently hated by all the colored people within the circle of his reputation. Although intimate with her husband, this man was so displeasing to Mrs. Darley, that she had plainly intimated to him that his presence was disagreeable, and he now very rarely entered the house.

"Hallo, Pic," growled this worthy gentleman, as the negro approached. "Who've you got to your house?"

“Got, Mas’r Sykes?” inquired Pictor, with an air of intense innocence. “We’ve got all de folks.”

“Is your master in?”

“Mas’r? Well, no, mas’r ain’t in; but mist’s and Missy Dora dere. Mist’s ain’t bery well dis yer mornin’, an’ she layin’ abed. Got any arrand for her, Mas’r Sykes?”

“No,” snarled Sykes. “Who was that went across from the barn to the house with you about ten minutes ago, you black cuss?”

“’Bout ten minute ago,” repeated Pictor, leaning on the hoe he had been handling, and appearing to consider the question very gravely. “Well, now, Mas’r Sykes, you go agin larnin’ niggers any sort o’ ting, dey say. Now, dat all right I s’pose, else Mas’r Sykes ’ouldn’t go fer it. But now jes see here, mas’r. Ef a nigger ain’t neber been taught nuffin’, how’s he gwine to tell nuffin’?”

“What do you mean, you old fool?”

“W’y, mas’r axes me who went crost dis yer yard ’bout ten minute ago. Now, niggers hain’t got no call to know what’s o’clock, yer den say; den how’s dis nigger gwine to know how much is ten minute?”

Mr. Sykes looked at the sable logician with a curious expression of bewildered anger, but found no better reply to make than an oath, which, being neither pleasing in itself nor appropriate to the subject, we will omit.

“Who’s in your house now, then?” asked Sykes, angrily, after he had thus relieved his mind.

“ Well, dere’s mist’s. Now, Mas’r Sykes, I feel worried ’bout mist’s. She’s mighty porely dese times. ’Pears like some days she gwine to drop right off de hooks, an’ ——”

“ Never mind your mistress, you blockhead ; who’s she got with her ? ”

“ Wid her. W’y, she got Missy Dora. Dat chile ain’t neber fur off from her mammy. Spec’s dere ain’t no more sich gals ’bout here, any way. — What, is yer gwine, Mas’r Sykes ? Won’t yer step in an’ ax for mist’s ? Missy Dora gib you all de ’tic’lars ’bout her healf. — Gosh ! now dat feller gone off powerful mad wid dis yer pore ignorant critter. Wish’t I know’d how ter talk to a gen’l’mán better. Ho, ho, ho ! ”

Pieter indulged for a few moments in a congratulatory chuckle, but then became suddenly grave.

“ Yer ole fool,” said he severely to himself. “ Can’t yer do nuffin’ but stan’ cacklin’ here like de rooster w’en de ole hen lay a egg ? Dat feller won’t neber rest till he’s got some one ter come an’ help him peek inter all our cubboards an’ tater kittles arter dat Yankee. Pore feller, he’s got to trot. Won’t git dat nice all-day sleep mist’s tole for. Wish’t ole Pic could get wounded an’ go ter bed up sta’rs all day.”

Shambling across the yard in a purposeless sort of way, Pieter stopped to gather an armful of wood, in case he should be watched, and carried it in a leisurely manner into the kitchen.

No sooner, however, was the door safely closed behind him, and the wooden bar dropped, than the old negro flung down his wood upon the hearth, and inquired, —

“Mas’r cap’n, how yer like to hab a call from de neighbors roun’ here?”

Captain Karl started to his feet, and carried his hand to his empty scabbard.

“What do you mean, Pictor?” asked Mrs. Darley, hurriedly. “Is there danger?”

“Dat old Sykes ben trailin’ roun’ here, an’ want fer know who come cross from de barn to de house long o’ me jes now.”

“You did not tell him, Pictor!”

“Dis nigger ain’t quite a fool yit, mist’s. But I couldn’ pull de wool ober he eyes so fur but what he t’ought he seed de leetle end ob de rat’s tail, an’ he smell him powerful strong. So he went off to git seben oder debils wusser dan hisself, I spec.”

“I must go at once,” exclaimed Captain Karl. “But whither?” added he, bitterly.

Mrs. Darley, Dora, and Pictor looked at each other and at him. The mother was the first to speak.

“Pictor, you know the place where that poor fellow was hid last summer so long.”

“Yes, mist’s,” said the negro, gloomily.

“You will not be afraid to trust this gentleman with the secret of it?”

“Not ef you say so, mist’s.”

“ You need not be afraid. I pledge you my honor that your secret shall be safely kept,” exclaimed Captain Karl.

“ Dunno wot you’ll see an’ hear dar,” said Pictor, while his face lost a shade or two of its rich coffee color.

“ Why?” asked the officer, anxiously.

“ A pore boy dat dis ole Sykes licked mos’ to def got away an’ hid dere, an’ arter a w’ile he died,” said the negro, in a hard, savage voice.

“ Shocking. But no one knew where he was hid?”

“ No one but dem as helped him.”

“ Negroes?”

“ Yes, mas’r.”

“ I will trust them,” cried the captain, joyously. “ I should not be afraid to let every negro in the South know my hiding-place, and that’s more than I would say for the white men even of my own Massachusetts.”

“ Mas’r, I’s proud to sarve ye,” said Pictor, straightening his poor back to the utmost.

“ Dora, put up as much food as they can carry; and you had better take a blanket or comforter, Captain Karl. You may have to stay a day or two in the mountains,” said Mrs. Darley, anxiously.

“ A small blanket, if you will be so kind, would indeed be a luxury,” said the soldier, smiling; “ and I will leave it behind me for Pictor to bring back. But will not you get into trouble yourself, if it is known that you have helped a Union officer in this manner?”

“ Perhaps. But that is a matter we cannot control.

No one will hurt me or this little girl, however, and Mr. Darley is too well known as a secessionist to suffer in his property. A few hard words will be all, so far as we are concerned. But Pictor —”

She paused and looked troubled.

“Yes, they will try to force the truth from him if possible. Will your husband allow him to be ill used?”

Mrs. Darley shook her head.

“The faithful fellow must not be exposed to such a risk. What can be done?”

“I will go alone,” said Captain Karl, firmly. “Pictor will give me directions, and I dare say I can find the spot you mention. If not, I will hide somewhere among the mountains until I can go forward upon my journey.”

“No; you would be found, or you would die of hunger and exposure. Pictor shall go with you, and he shall not come back, — that is, if there is any danger. Before night I shall know if Sykes has suspected enough to bring the Vigilance Committee upon us. If they come, they would think nothing of torturing a negro to death on the chance of catching a federal officer.

“After dark, Pictor, come carefully back until you can see this house. If all is safe there shall be a light in Miss Dora’s room, up stairs. You know which it is?”

“Yes, mist’s.”

“But if I think any one means to harm you for what we have done to-day, there will be no light up stairs, and you will go back to Captain Karl.”

“An’ whar ’ll I go arter dat, mist’s?” asked the negro, in a voice husky with emotion, and the sudden hope that the words of his mistress had aroused in his heart.

“To the North, to freedom, Pictor,” said Mrs. Darley, solemnly. “I have been thinking of you for a good while, Pictor. I am going fast to another home than this. There would be no one to protect you from — many things. Your master is going to join the rebel army, and, I suppose, would either sell you or take you with him. You deserve better than that, Pictor, and you shall have it. If you come back this time I will contrive your escape before I die; but perhaps if you go now, Captain Karl can help you after you reach the Union army.”

“I can, and will,” said the captain, eagerly. “Let him come with me, if you have really made up your mind to send him away, and I will charge myself with his welfare.”

“Let it be so then,” said Mrs. Darley, faintly; “and I thank the Lord, that has opened a way for him, and for you, too, for he will help you in your escape in a great many ways.”

At this moment Pictor, who had stood rolling his great eyes from the face of one speaker to the other in a sort of bewildered ecstasy, suddenly limped forward, and fell upon his knees beside his mistress.

Seizing her pale and trembling hand, he pressed his great lips reverently upon it, and sobbed out, —

“De Lord bress you, mist’s. De Lord bress you an’

keep you. An' ef you's r'ally a gwine, it's cause de angels is lonesome fer ye. I didn' spect it, mist's; I nebber spected fer ter be free till I got to heben."

"But I have tried to be kind to you here, Pictor, and so have the children," said Mrs. Darley, a little hurt, after all, that her servant should be so entirely overjoyed at leaving her forever.

"Yes, mist's, yu's ben raal good alluz, and missy, too. Nobbuddy couldn' be better off ef dey'd got to be a slave dan I's ben long o' yer, mist's; but mist's dear, 'tain't de same ting, no how. De bestest off slave 's wusser off den de mis'ablest free man."

"Don't come back, at any rate, Pictor. I never knew you cared so much, or you should have gone long ago. Remember, you are not to come back, on any account. Dora, bring my purse, and give it to Uncle Pictor. I'm sorry it's so little, but it's all I have. And now you must really go as fast as you can, captain. I have done very wrong to keep you so long. Here are the basket and the blanket. Good by, sir, and take care of Pictor for me."

"You may depend upon me for that, Mrs. Darley. I shall never forget your kindness. Good by, madam. Good by, Miss Dora."

He shook hands with the mother, hurriedly kissed the child's forehead, and was gone, followed by Pictor, who laughed and cried by turns in such a manner as to make his farewell speeches rather unintelligible.

CHAPTER III.

Two or three hours after the departure of the fugitives passed quietly over — quietly, that is, as to events; but Mrs. Darley had been so agitated and tired with the excitement of the morning that she could not get over it, and Dora was far more alarmed than she confessed at the alternate fever and deathly faintness that her mother vainly tried to conceal. Whatever the child could do was done, although with few words; nor did the little housemaid neglect to prepare dinner for her father at the usual time, although she secretly feared his return home in a temper ill suited to a pleasant repast.

A little after noon, the sound of hurried feet was heard outside the door, and Mr. Darley entered with rude violence, followed by Sykes and another man of the same stamp.

Mrs. Darley closed her eyes, and turned very pale. Dora went to her side, and taking her hand, turned a keen, defiant gaze upon the strangers. At her father she did not glance.

“Mary, what man came here this morning about eight o’clock?” asked Darley, sternly.

His wife made no answer, nor did she uncloset her eyes. "Mother is very sick indeed to-day, father. She isn't able to talk at all," said Dora, firmly.

"Well, you're not sick, Miss Pert. Answer for her."

"I can't. It disturbs her to hear talking. Do go away, father, and take these men. Poor mother!"

"Just tell me this, Dora. Did a man come here this morning?" persisted Darley, impatiently, although he lowered his voice, and cast an anxious glance at his wife's deathly face.

"A man? There's no one about, father, but mother and me. There's no man here."

"Well, but there has been. I see a feller come in with one o' yer old nigger. I see him myself," broke in the Sykes, pushing himself forward.

Dora glanced scornfully at the speaker, and made no reply.

"Come, Do, tell me if such a man came, and who he was, and where he's gone, and then we won't plague you and mother any more," said Darley, in the coaxing tone that long experience had taught him was the easiest method of reaching his daughter's heart.

"There was a man came to the door, and asked for something to eat, this morning, father. I gave him something, and he went away. I don't know where he's gone, or who he was, and I can't tell anything more about him. Now, please, father, will you take these men away, and let poor mother rest?"

"*She* don't know anything about him," said Darley, turning to his companions. "I didn't suppose she did in the first place. Come, let's quit."

"Well, that old nigger knows ef the gal don't," persisted Sykes. "He wouldn't ha' been so sarcy to me ef he hadn't know'd somethin' more'n he let on. Let's go see what he has to say 'bout it."

"All right. You may talk to him as ha'sh as you're a mind to," said Mr. Darley, leading the way to the door, and evidently glad to relieve his wife and daughter of the annoyance of the examination by shifting it to shoulders so well used to burdens as those of poor Pictor.

Left alone, Mrs. Darley broke into a fit of convulsive weeping, and Dora vainly tried to comfort her.

While she was still bending over the couch, the kitchen door was again opened, and Darley's voice harshly inquired, —

"Where's Pictor, Dora?"

"I don't know where he is, father."

"Haven't you sent him away?"

"No, father, I have not."

"Well, haven't you, Mary? What in the world are you crying so about?"

"O, father, mother is very sick indeed. How can you worry her so?"

Half angry, half ashamed, Mr. Darley drew back his head, muttering inaudibly some remark about a "saucy young one," and went back to his companions.

After a short consultation all three rode away together, and Dora at last had the pleasure of seeing her mother drop into a troubled sleep.

This lasted until about four o'clock, when Mr. Darley returned alone, but in a much more violent mood than he had been at noon. He had been drinking pretty freely with his companions, who had not spared some taunts as to his being afraid of his wife and daughter, and intimations that Mrs. Darley knew very well where the Yankee officer was, and might be made to tell if her husband could muster sufficient spirit to insist upon it.

More than this, Mr. Darley had become anxious regarding Pictet's prolonged absence, knowing, as he did, his wife's wish to give the slave his freedom; and he had returned home determined to learn the exact truth as to the occurrences of the morning.

The invalid, suddenly aroused from sleep, was naturally nervous and bewildered; and Mr. Darley, finding her answers still less satisfactory than in the morning, soon became very angry and abusive. Not satisfied with what could be said upon the subject in hand, he went back to various matters of disagreement between himself and his wife in former times, principally connected with the abolitionist sentiments that Mrs. Darley had occasionally expressed, and the horror she had not concealed at certain cruelties and excesses among Mr. Darley's chosen friends and associates.

The consequence of this violence was, that the sick woman became terribly agitated, and was finally seized with nervous spasms, that seemed likely to end her life at once. The sight of her sufferings, and Dora's indignant expostulations, at last aroused a feeling of shame and remorse in the husband's nature, and he hurried away to send the doctor, and to bring Mrs. Wilson, a married sister of his own, who lived at a distance of two miles.

Before they arrived, however, the invalid had grown so much calmer, under Dora's eager but judicious care, that the doctor, after attentively examining her condition, merely prescribed a composing draught, and hurried away to another patient. As Mr. Darley attended him to the door, however, the gruff old physician briefly said, —

“That woman'll die any minute — go right out like a candle. All you can do for her is to keep her quiet and comfortable. Don't agitate her about anything.”

Mr. Darley stood on the doorstep, looking after the doctor's sulky, with a very uncomfortable feeling about his throat. He was really as fond of his wife as a selfish and depraved man could be ; he had, indeed, been passionately in love with her when he tempted her to run away from her father's house with him, and the doctor's warning sounded to him very much like a reproach.

Presently he went quietly into the house, and sat down by the fire, with his head leaning on his hand. Dora, looking keenly at him as she went in and out of the

bedroom, pitied her father, and yet could not but be glad at the thought that while thus preoccupied, he would not be likely to ask any more questions about Pieter.

Mrs. Wilson, a sharp, bustling, managing sort of woman, so soon as she arrived, took possession of the invalid, and ordered everything about her in her own fashion. Sometimes these fashions were not Dora's; and in these cases the child quietly pursued her own way, in spite of her aunt's peremptory advice to the contrary.

"Mother likes it this way," was her simple reply when her aunt crossly inquired why she had altered the arrangement of the window curtains that Mrs. Wilson had carefully pinned together, and that Dora now looped back to admit the soft western light.

"Little girls shouldn't think they know more than them that's older than they be," said Mrs. Wilson, frowning.

"But I *do* know more about mother, because I'm more used to her than any one else is," said Dora, simply.

"Dora, child," said Mrs. Darley, feebly, "you've been in the house all day. Go now and take a little run while aunt sits with me. Go meet Tom."

"I'd rather stay with you, mother."

"No, Dora; I want you to go. I really do."

"Well, then, I will," said the child; and putting a little shawl about her, she stole softly out at the back door.

CHAPTER IV.

ABOUT a mile from the farm-house, at the same hour, and coming towards it, a stout lad of sixteen years trudged along beside his ox-team, bending low his head to shield it in some measure from the eddying whirls of sand dashed into his eyes, his nose, his mouth, and almost through his very skin by the keen north-east wind that came sweeping down the gorges of the Alleghany Mountains, driving every drifting thing before it.

Tom Darley — for it was he — stopped and turned his back for a moment, and while he wiped his eyes upon the sleeve of his blue frock, said aloud, —

“Pesky wind! Any one might know it came from Yankee land, it’s so mean and ugly.”

Then, somewhat comforted by this expression of his feelings, he ran a few steps to overtake the oxen, and walked along at their heads, whistling “Dixie,” while the wind, shrilly piping a sort of gigantic Yankee Doodle, seemed defying the boy to an unequal contest.

Presently, the road, after skirting a high hill, the lowest step, in fact, of the mountain range, entered a little

wood, whose close-set evergreen trees made a very effectual barrier to the sweep of the wind.

Once more Tom paused to draw his breath and wipe his eyes, and was again moving on, when a little figure suddenly dropped down beside him, from the crest of a huge boulder at the road-side.

Tom started back in considerable alarm. His first impression was of a panther or wildcat. In the next moment he perceived who it really was, and exclaimed,—

“Hallo, Do, is that you? How came you here, and what makes you jump out on a fellow that way?”

“I came to meet you, Tom,” said Dora, putting her hand caressingly upon his arm.

Such a movement was so unusual in the undemonstrative girl, that her brother looked down at her in some surprise.

“What’s the matter then? You’ve been crying—haven’t you, little goose?” asked he, with rough kindness.

“O, Tom, there’s a horrid time at home,” burst out Dora, and then stopped with her lips close shut together to keep down the rising sob; for whatever Tom might suspect, Dora would have suffered almost anything before she would have let him see her cry.

“What’s up now?” asked Tom, anxiously.

“Mother’s worse. We’ve had the doctor!”

“That’s too bad. I’m real sorry, I do declare,” said

the boy in awkward sorrow. "How did you come to leave her, Dora?"

"Aunt Wilson's with her, and she sent me away. She told me to come and meet you. I reckon she wanted to talk to aunt."

The brother and sister walked on in silence for a little while. Then Dora said, mysteriously, —

"And Pictor's gone. Dear old Uncle Pic — we shan't have him to play with us ever again."

"Pictor gone! Where's he gone?" asked Tom, wonderingly.

"Mother gave him leave to go, only you mustn't say anything about it to father."

"Gave him leave to run away?"

"Yes, for fear of father."

"Come, Dora, begin at the beginning, and tell me your story. I can't make anything of it this way."

So Dora did as she was bidden, and in a brief, distinct manner related all the events of the day. The only thing she omitted to mention was the refuge of Pictor and the captain. This she concealed, partly because the cave was Pictor's secret, partly because she did not quite trust Tom's sympathy with the fugitives, and his first words gave her reason to congratulate herself on her prudence.

"I wish I had been about home this morning," said Tom, bringing down his ox-goâd upon poor Bright's neck.

“Why, Tom?”

“I guess that fellow wouldn’t have got off so nicely.”

“You wouldn’t have tried to give him up to be put in jail and kept ever so many years, perhaps, and his wound never even washed — would you, Tom?” asked Dora, indignantly.

“Of course I would. Ain’t he a Yankee? and ain’t the Yankees trying all they can to shut our men up in their prisons, or kill them outright? or if they don’t do either of those, to make slaves of us here at home?”

“I don’t believe it, Tom, and I don’t believe you know better than mother about it. And she did all she could for the Yankee captain.”

“Mother’s a first-rate woman, Dora, and I’ll lick any fellow that says there’s a better inside the state line; but, Do, she’s a woman, and women don’t know about these things, same as men do.”

“How is it with boys?” asked Dora, slyly.

“The boys hear the men talk, and they learn the right thing. But women only think about one thing at a time; and if a man has curly hair and a cut on his head, they’ll do the same by him as they would by their own brothers, and never remember that this very fellow they’re nursing and cuddling up has come here on purpose to kill their brothers.”

“Well, you won’t try to get them taken again — will you, Tom? You knew I told you for a secret.”

Tom walked silently on for a while, whistling to himself, and examining the end of his goad; at last he said, rather surlily, —

“No, I don’t know as I shall, now that mother has helped them off. But if I’d got sight of that fellow this morning —”

“Never mind what you would have done if something had happened that didn’t happen. You’ve promised not to tell, and that’s all.”

“No, I didn’t promise not to tell. I said I wouldn’t try to have them caught. But if father asks me if I know anything about it, I ain’t going to lie, and say I don’t.”

“No, of course you can’t,” said Dora, sadly.

“Besides, I think father’d ought to know about Pic,” continued Tom. “Mother’s had her way, and given him his liberty, right or wrong, and I think father had at least ought to be told how he’s gone.”

“Do you?” asked Dora, thoughtfully.

“Of course I do. But I ain’t a telltale, nor I don’t want to get mother and you into trouble. So I shan’t say anything if I can help it, and maybe mother will make up her mind to tell for herself. I’d be glad if she would.”

“Perhaps she will; but she can tell best whether she ought to or not.”

To this the young advocate of male supremacy made no reply, and presently Dora said, —

“At any rate, you can’t tell where they’re gone, because you don’t know.”

“That’s so,” said Tom; “and I wouldn’t advise you to tell me.”

“I ain’t going to,” returned Dora, shrewdly. “But here we are at home, and I must run in to get supper ready. Come in as quick as you can.”

“As quick as I’ve put up the cattle and given them their supper. After that I’ve got to milk, I suppose. You see I shall have to do Pieter’s work now, besides my own.”

“I’ll help you all I can,” said Dora, gayly, as she ran into the house. But she smiled no longer, when, on entering the house, she found her father still seated by the fireplace, his face buried in his hands, while her aunt moved about the kitchen with noisy efforts at quiet, making preparation for supper.

“Well, child,” began she, when Dora appeared, “you seem to take it easy, any way. Where’ve you been tramping, I’d like to know, and who’d ye think was doing up your work for ye?”

“Mother told me to go and meet Tom, and I’ve been,” said Dora, quietly. “And you needn’t have done anything about supper, aunt; I shall have it all ready at six o’clock.”

“Massy! How peart we be!” exclaimed Mrs. Wilson. “You know a heap more than ever your granny did — don’t ye, child?”

To this address Dora made no reply, but went steadily about her preparations for supper, quietly undoing, as she proceeded, nearly everything her aunt had done.

Mrs. Wilson, after grimly watching her a few moments, went and sat down by her brother.

“John,” began she, in the whining and high-pitched voice many persons seem to consider essential to the proper treatment of mournful or religious subjects, — “John, I suppose you know there’s a awful visitation a hanging over ye. Mary ain’t no better than a dead woman, and I shouldn’t wonder a mite if she was took afore another morning.”

Mr. Darley groaned aloud.

“Yes, I know it’s awful,” recommenced his comforter, “to be took right out o’ your warm bed as it might be, and buried up in the cold ground. It makes a body’s flesh creep to think on’t; now don’t it? But then it’s what we’ve all got to come to. There ain’t no gittin’ red on’t, do what you will. It’s her turn to-day, and it may be your’n or mine to-morrow. It’s an awful judgment, sartain.”

During this speech Dora had stood motionless, her eyes fixed, half in horror, half in surprise, upon her aunt’s face. When she had done, she came up to her father, and putting her arms about his neck, said softly, —

“It won’t be mother that will die and be buried up in the ground, father dear. It will only just be her body,

and her soul is going to live in heaven with Jesus. And if we do just as well as ever we can, we shall go there too, when God is willing to let us, and perhaps see her again."

"Child, who told you this?" asked the father, hoarsely.

"Mother told me; and it is all true, every word of it, for she read it out of the Bible to me," said Dora, triumphantly.

Mr. Darley, without uncovering his face, laid one arm about the child's waist. It was the first time that Dora remembered such an act; for besides her own shy and reserved habits, she had for a year or two plainly shown by manner, if not by words, her shame and indignation at her father's intemperate and violent habits.

Occasionally, too, he had ill-treated her mother, when angry and intoxicated; and this was something that Dora could scarcely endure in silence. Mr. Darley had seen and resented this silent protest on the part of his own child, and after a while the father and daughter had come to have as little as possible to do with each other.

Now, however, all this was forgotten in the common sorrow that had fallen upon them; and as Dora felt her father's arm about her waist, she drew his head upon her bosom, and kissed his forehead.

Mrs. Wilson's harsh voice indignantly interposed.

"Well, brother, I must say, if you're going to let a saucy young one like that teach you religion, you're a

bigger fool than I take you for. My sakes! I'd like to catch one of my gals speaking up to me the way she's done ever since I stepped my foot inside o' that door. She's reg'lar spilte, that child is; an' I guess you'll find your hands full when you come to have her on 'em all alone."

At this moment the feeble voice of the invalid was heard calling Dora, and the child sprang away to obey the summons.

CHAPTER V.

AFTER supper, Mrs. Wilson said that she must go home for a while, but would come back and stay the night with her sister-in-law, who, she again prophesied, might "drop off most any minute."

No one opposed her departure. In fact, Dora and Tom watched it with silent joy, while their father hardly noticed it.

So soon as the evening work was done, the children went in to sit with their mother. Mrs. Darley seemed very much better. Her cheeks burned with a hectic color, and her eyes were bright with fever. She felt strong enough to sit up in her bed with pillows behind her, and Tom rather boisterously expressed his delighted belief that she was "going to get smart again right off."

Dora said nothing, but her face was very pale, her eyes very large and bright, her lips very firmly shut. She had watched the different stages of her mother's disease, too narrowly to be deceived. Nor did Mrs. Darley herself believe for a moment that this sudden rally was other than a fatal symptom. She knew that her hour had come, and she was ready to meet it with

Christian hope and trust. But she was very glad that this temporary strength had been given her, for she had many things to say to her children, and had feared that she should not be able.

She spoke first to them of the subjects most important at all times, and now naturally uppermost in her own mind. She tried her very best to make them feel that the approaching change she was to undergo was neither a misfortune nor a punishment, but a sure and blessed change from a world of sin and sorrow to one all joy and peace, for such as were fitted for it.

She spoke long and earnestly upon these matters, and neither of her young hearers ever quite forgot the solemn and beautiful truths she uttered.

But the mother did not forget that she was to leave her children in this world, perhaps for many years, and she desired to point out for them that path through its perils that seemed to her the safest."

"Is the door closed, Tom?" asked she, hesitatingly, after a short silence.

"Yes, mother," said the boy.

"I have been thinking, Tom, that when I am gone, and when your father knows that Uncle Pic is gone for always, he will very likely enter the army."

"Perhaps so, mother," said Tom, leaning his arm against the wall, and hiding his face upon it.

"Perhaps he will want you to go too, my dear boy,

and I have always taught you to obey your father above all things, except to obey God."

"I know it, mother," sobbed poor Tom.

"And I say the same now," continued the mother, feebly, for her strength was failing. "But O, my dear boy, I cannot bear to think of your joining these rebels. Remember that I was a New England girl. I lived for twenty years among free men, and I have never learned to love slavery.

"I have a sister—at least I had; but it is a great many years since I heard from her. In fact, I never had but one letter, and that was just after I came here. I cried so much over that, and was so homesick for weeks afterwards, that I think your father destroyed any others that came. At least, I wrote and wrote, and never got an answer. I never dared write to my father, for Lucy told me how terribly angry he was when I ran away. But, Tom, if you and Dora could go to her, I know she would give my children a home, and put you both in the way of doing something better than to fight for a rebellion.

"That letter, Dora, is in my bureau drawer, at the bottom of the little box where I keep my trinkets. All that I have of such things, dear, are yours now. Take the letter, and keep it. Perhaps some day it will help you to find your aunt Lucy. I cannot tell either of you to leave your father, if he will keep you with him; but you know now what I wish.

“I had rather, Tom, that you died fighting for freedom, than lived and rose to the highest rank in the rebel army.

“Dora, comfort and darling of my life, I could die content if I only knew that you would grow up in the home of a good and pious New England woman, such as I am sure my sister is.

“Now kiss me, my darlings, kiss me once again, — and once again, — and then ask your poor father to come in and see me, while you stay out there. And, Dora, if aunt Wilson comes back, ask her to please to sit down with you a little while. I want to see father all alone.”

The children obeyed, and for the next hour no sound was heard in the kitchen except Tom's heavy sobs, as he lay stretched upon the settle, crying out his last boy's tears, the loud ticking of the clock, and the low murmur of voices from the bedroom.

Up and down the kitchen softly paced Dora's little figure, her face white as ashes, except where dark rings had formed beneath her eyes, her hands knotted and twisted in each other, her lips pressed firmly together, her unswerving gaze bent steadily before her. It was a dumb anguish, as rare as strange in a child's heart, or on a child's face.

Thus did Mrs. Wilson find her when she returned, and even her coarse nature recoiled from a grief so terrible and so uncomplaining.

She went softly towards the bedroom door. Dora

interposed, and pointing to a chair, said, in a low, strange voice, —

“Mother is talking with father, now. Please to sit down until he comes out. She said so.”

Mrs. Wilson silently obeyed, and taking out a spotted red and white cotton pocket handkerchief, she began to cry in a snuffling, demonstrative manner.

So passed another hour, and then Mr. Darley opened the bedroom door, and said, in a choked voice, —

“Come, children; come sister: she’s going.”

Midnight closed the scene. A mortal had died to earth, an angel been born to heaven.

CHAPTER VI.

THE day after Mrs. Darley's funeral, her sister-in-law made her appearance at the farm-house with a mind made up to business.

"Well, John," began she, as soon as the preliminary greetings were over, "Cephas says you told him this morning you was going to enlist. Is that so?"

"Well, yes, I think some of it," said Mr. Darley, slowly. "You see Pictor's gone."

"Hain't you never heerd nothing from that nigger?" asked Mrs. Wilson, indignantly.

"No; nor I don't expect to," returned her brother, concealing what he really did know, from an instinctive desire to avoid the comments Mrs. Wilson would be sure to make upon his wife's conduct.

"H'm. Run away, I suppose," suggested the lady. "Like enough it was he helped off that Yankee officer that they was looking for round here. Joe Sykes said all along he knew 'twas him that he see cutting acrost from the barn to the house here. On'y Mary was so sick that day that there wan't no good asking questions of her nor the gal."

“Yes, we’d something else to care for, before another morning, than Yankees or niggers either,” said Darley, gloomily.

“But,” pursued Mrs. Wilson, “that ain’t what we was saying. If you’ve made up your mind to jine the army, what you going to do with the children?”

“Well, I’ve thought about that too,” returned her brother; “and I’ve concluded to take Tom along with me. He’s sixteen years old, I believe, and as stout and handy as any man. He’ll do first rate, and I shall keep him under my own hand.”

“But the gal, brother?”

“Well, I some thought of asking you to take her, Polly. She’s smart as a steel trap, and can earn her salt anywheres —”

“She’s too smart for me by half,” broke in Mrs. Wilson. “A sassier young one I never did see; but it’s partly the fault of her bringing up, and she hadn’t ought to be give over without a try. I expected you’d say just what you have said, John; and I’ll tell you plain just what I’ve made up my mind to do.

“I ain’t a going to have no half-way works now. I ain’t a going to have the gal come to my house to be company, and set with her hands in her lap all day. Nor I ain’t a going to have her, at the fust quick word, fly up into my face like a young wildcat. Nor yet I ain’t going to have her, just as I’ve got her broke in and trained

some, go kiting off to live long o' some one else, whether it's you or another.

"Now, what I'll do is this. I'll take the child, and treat her just 'xactly like my own gals from fust to last; and I shall have just the same power over her as I have over them. I'll do well by her, and I'll make her do well by me, if I know myself."

"Well, sister, that's a good offer, and I thank you kind for it, I'm sure," began Mr. Darley; but his sister interrupted him.

"Wait a bit," said she, dryly; "I ain't one of them as does something for nothing, quite. It's a resky business and a costly business, this bringing up a gal, and doing for her, and I'm a poor woman. But if you'll give me your house'l stuff to boot, and Mary's clothes and fallals, why, I'll say done."

"You mean all that's in the house here?" asked Darley.

"Yes; 'tain't much, nor 'twouldn't fetch much at auction, 'specially these times; but some of it'd come awful handy over to our house, and some on't I could store away against the gals get merried. Dora'll come in for her full share, you may depend."

"Yes, she'd ought to do that," said Mr. Darley, reluctantly. "And as for Mary's clothes, why, I think the child had ought to have them, any way."

"And so she shall, some of them; but there's some

that wouldn't suit her no way, though they'd do fust rate for me. Men don't know nothing about sech things, and you'd better leave it all to me. I shan't wrong the gal, you may depend."

"No, Polly, I don't s'pose you would. Nobody'd be like to wrong a poor little motherless gal that was their own flesh and blood. But I'm afraid Dora'll kind o' miss home fashions. She's been used to having her own way, pretty much, here at home, especially since her mother's been laid up."

"Yes; and in another year she'd ha' been spilte outright. It's a chance, now, if she can be brought round."

"O, I guess tain't quite so bad as that, Polly," said Mr. Darley, good-humoredly. "I guess she's a pretty good sort of a gal yet. And I ain't going to give her up neither. When my time's out I shall come and board with you. You'll agree to take me?"

"Yes, I suppose so," assented Mrs. Wilson, somewhat ungraciously.

"And if I should ever get a home again, marrying or any other way, why, I shall want her back; and, since you're so sharp, I'll agree to let you keep all the stuff you get with her, and, maybe, give you a present to boot."

"Well, we can talk about that when the time comes," said Mrs. Wilson. "It's all settled now."

"Yes, I reckon," assented her brother, rather doubtfully.

At this moment a light foot came down the stairs into the kitchen, and Dora herself appeared, looking very pale and worn, but quite calm. She greeted her aunt quietly, and went about some little household matter in her usual steady manner.

“Come here, my gal,” said her father, holding out his hand.

She went directly and stood beside him, her slender hand resting lightly upon his shoulder. He put his arm kindly about her.

“Here’s your aunt, Dora, is going to let you come and live with her, while Tom, and I are gone to the war. She’s going to be real good and kind to you, and you’ll be the best girl that ever was to her; now won’t you, Dora?”

The child’s face grew paler still, and her eyes lifted themselves sharply to her aunt’s face. She read there no more promise than she had expected.

“How long am I to stay there, father?” asked she, moving a little closer to his side.

“O, I don’t know,” returned Mr. Darley, evasively. “I expect I shall stay in the army till they fight it out; and that won’t be to-morrow, nor next week.”

“And when you are through, you will come for me again?” questioned Dora.

Mr. Darley hesitated, and his sister answered for him,—

“Now, John, what’s the use of licking the devil round the stump that way? The gal might as well know fust as last that she’s coming to me for good and all. Your mother’s dead, Dora, and ’tain’t likely your father’ll be settled ag’in,—at any rate, not right away,—and he’s give you to me, to do for just as if you was my own; and that’s all about it.”

Without a word, Dora turned away and went into her mother’s bedroom, closing and buttoning the door after her. There, all alone, upon the bed where her dear mother had died, she silently wept the first tears she had shed since that loss came upon her. But hers were not the tears that soften and comfort tender hearts; they were bitter, despairing tears, and they left her who shed them determined and desperate.

“I was afraid she wouldn’t like it,” said Mr. Darley, in a tone of regret, when he was alone with his sister.

“Temper, that’s all,” replied Mrs. Wilson, sharply. “She’s spilte, and that’s all that’s to be said. But she’ll come to after a while, when she finds she can’t help herself.”

“Maybe; but you ain’t going to be ha’sh with the child, Polly. I won’t have that,” said the father, anxiously.

“Don’t you worry. I shan’t eat her up, you needn’t believe,” sniffed the indignant matron; and Mr. Darley tricū to think all was satisfactorily arranged.

CHAPTER VII.

A FEW weeks more, and Mr. Darley's arrangements for selling his farm and stock had been made, and he had enlisted with his son in the rebel army.

Tom had not forgotten his mother's last wishes ; but although he was extremely fond of her, and had been very much affected by her death, he still secretly held the idea common to the class of men with whom he had been bred, that a woman's opinions upon matters of public interest were hardly worth the attention of the sterner sex, and were necessarily feeble and one-sided. He did not now express this opinion to Dora, through respect for his mother's memory ; but she perceived that he still held it, and was secretly indignant with him for doing so.

Then, Tom had his father's direct command to oppose to his mother's conditional wishes, and she had distinctly said that she would not have him disobey his father ; but perhaps more than all the rest, Tom, who was as ardent and as ignorant a politician as most lads, sided strongly, in his own mind, with the secessionists.

Part of all this argument in favor of enlisting beside

his father, the boy repeated to his sister as they were returning from a long Sunday afternoon walk a few days before the sale of the old home.

Dora listened attentively, and without interruption, till he had finished. Then she said, —

“ Well, Tom, you must do as you like, or rather as you think you ought to, and I shall do the same.”

“ What do you mean, Dora? What can you do except to stay quiet with aunt Wilson till we get back?”

“ I don’t think I shall stay with aunt Wilson a great while,” said Dora, quietly.

“ But you must, poor little Do,” said her brother, compassionately. “ I don’t suppose it will be very jolly, and I’m afraid you’ll miss the old home a good deal. But you stay quiet, like a good girl, till I get back, and if aunt Wilson don’t treat you well, I’ll — ”

He paused a little, doubtfully, and a quick smile shot across the little pale face beside him.

“ What will you do to aunt Wilson if she don’t treat me well?” asked Dora, merrily.

“ Well, I can’t do much to her, maybe, but I’ll give her boy Dick the darnedest licking he ever got in his life, I’ll be hound.”

Dora laughed outright.

“ You dear old Tom,” said she, “ and what good would that do me? Do you think aunt would treat me any the better for it? ”

“Well, it would do me some good if it didn’t you,” muttered Tom, half ashamed of his comical threat.

“No, dear Tom,” continued Dora, while the smile died off her face, and gave place to the look of patient sternness, if it may so be called, that was fast becoming habitual to it; “such ways as that are only good to laugh about. But I know just as well as I want to that I shan’t be able to live at aunt Wilson’s, though I’m going to try a little while, because it’s father that’s put me there. And if I find that I can’t stand it —”

“Well, what will you do then, poor little girl?” asked Tom.

“I don’t just know myself,” said Dora, thoughtfully; “and if I did, I don’t think I should tell you, because you might try to stop me; but I shall contrive some way or other to get to Massachusetts, and find mother’s sister that she told us of.”

“Aunt Lucy? Yes, I remember. Did you find the letter mother told about?”

“No!” exclaimed Dora, indignantly. “Aunt Wilson went and took all the things out of the drawers the very day after the funeral; and I suppose she read the letter, and then burnt it up, for when I asked her about it she wouldn’t tell me, nor she wouldn’t let me look among mother’s things. She has taken all that was in the bureau, and carried it off to her own house.”

“What, to keep?”

“I suppose so. She told me everything that was in the house was hers now, and I had no more right to meddle with anything than any one else had.”

“But mother said that all she had was yours!” exclaimed Tom, indignantly.

“I know it. I don’t care for clothes, nor ribbons, and such things; but I should have liked to have them because they were mother’s, and I dare say I should have given almost all of them to aunt. I would only have cared to keep the things I have seen mother wear most. But now I haven’t anything at all to call my own.”

“It’s awful mean, and I ain’t going to stand it,” said Tom, wrathfully; “I’ll talk to father about it.”

“No, Tom, there’s no use in that. Father knows, and he thinks it’s all right, or else he can’t help it. He couldn’t do anything, and there’s no good in getting him into a quarrel with aunt Wilson. Don’t worry. I shall take care of myself some way. I’m used to it, you know. As for the things, I don’t care much; but I wish I could get hold of that letter.”

“O, Ma’am Spite burnt it up, I reckon, just because she thought you’d like to have it.”

At this moment the children reached home, and the conversation ended.

A few days after, the farm and stock were sold at auction, and Mr. Darley, with Tom, set out for the town of Monterey, where he intended volunteering.

Dora went home with her aunt, who had caused all the furniture of the Darley homestead to be removed to her own house, where, as she had said to her brother, it added very much to the somewhat scanty comfort of her arrangements.

For a day or two matters went very peacefully. Mrs. Wilson, feeling, perhaps, some touch of pity for the motherless child, forbore to press her either with labor or discipline; and Dora, on the other hand, exerted herself to do all she could, and in the way that she supposed most likely to be agreeable to her aunt.

But at last came Monday, that terrible day to the households of short-tempered wives who have their own work to do. Jane and Louisa, Mrs. Wilson's daughters, always cased themselves, upon Monday morning, in a triple armor of sullen endurance and covert opposition to their mother's tyranny, promising themselves and each other to escape from it at the very earliest opportunity.

On this particular Monday Mrs. Wilson contrived to make herself more disagreeable and oppressive than usual. Nothing done by Jane, Louisa, or Dora was well done. Each in turn found herself reproached with laziness, stupidity, and that most comprehensive of household crimes, called "shiftlessness."

The daughters, well hardened to this periodical outpouring of sentiment, bore it, as usual, in sulky silence, varied with gestures, glances, muttered comments, and

when their mother was absent, with open expressions of discontent and rebellion.

But Dora, accustomed to her own mother's mild and affectionate rule, to commands so gentle that they seemed like requests, and to an authority as undoubted as it was unobtrusive, looked on at her aunt's domestic management with undisguised astonishment, merged in silent but indignant protest as she found herself becoming an equal sharer with her cousins in their mother's absence. She was silent, to be sure, and, as the day passed on, grew still more so; nor did she join in any of the mutinous gestures and whispered comments that sufficed for the relief of the other girls; but one accustomed to her face and manner would have read in the kindling eyes, pallid cheeks, and rigid mouth a gathering storm, whether of grief or anger, as much beyond the usual scope of a twelve years' temper as was the power of concealing it.

Evening came. Jane and Louisa cleared away the supper dishes, and put the cheerless kitchen to rights, while Dora, under her aunt's supervision, folded and sprinkled the clothes.

A large sheet came under the child's hands, and rather than ask help of her aunt, who had left her for a moment, she attempted to fold it alone, succeeding, as she thought, very well; but just as she was laying it in the basket Mrs. Wilson returned, and catching it out again, flung it on the table.

“What sort o’ way to fold a sheet’s that?” asked she, contemptuously; “you’re so plaguy smart I s’pose you couldn’t wait for me to take holt o’ the end, and so ye just wabbed it up any way, to call it done. I don’t think much o’ slickin’ over work that way. It’s my fashion to go through it.”

Dora made no reply; but as her aunt unrolled, with a jerk, the smoothly folded sheet, she took hold of one end, and helped to refold it. This was nearly done, when, with a snap and a jerk, intended to straighten it, Mrs. Wilson twitched the sheet out of Dora’s hands, and it fell upon the dirty floor between them.

“You great fool!” shouted Mrs. Wilson; and catching up the sheet with both hands, she struck Dora a swinging blow with it in her face.

“Ye did that o’ purpose, ye know ye did, ’cause you was mad at having to fold it over.”

“I did not,” said Dora’s voice, in an ominous tone, while her eyes were raised steadily to her aunt’s face.

“Say I lie, do ye!” screamed the angry woman. “You impudent trollop, I’ll teach ye to sarce me that way. You open your head agin, an’ see if ye don’t get fits.”

To this Dora made no reply in words, but her looks were too expressive to be misunderstood, and her aunt, after a moment’s pause, continued, —

“Now I ain’t a goin’ to have ye stand there lookin’ as

if ye'd eat me up. I can tell ye what it is, miss, the best thing for you to do is to go right ter work and unlarn all them pretty ways ye've been brought up in. They won't set well here, I can tell ye. Yer mother was as weak as water, and as silly about you as a hen with one chick; but I ain't no sech a fool."

"My mother was not a fool, nor silly, nor weak. You don't know anything about her, and I wish you wouldn't talk about her," said Dora, firmly and quietly.

"Hity-tity, ma'am!" cried Mrs. Wilson, furiously. "Do ye know who yer talkin' to? Do ye see that 'ere stick over the fireplace? Well, I can tell ye now that you and it will be like to git putty well acquainted before many more minits, ef ye don't down on yer knees and beg my pardon. Tell ye what, gal, I'm bound to tame ye down; that's partly what I took ye for, and it's jest as well to begin now as any time. We'll soon see, miss, who's the boss o' this shanty."

"I'll bet my money on the old gray mara;
Will anybody bet on the filly?"

sang Dick Wilson, a lad of eighteen, who, being now too big to be beaten by his mother, revenged himself by insolence for the injustice and tyranny she had exercised over his childhood.

The sins of the parents are, indeed, visited on the children; but also they rebound heavily to punish the source whence they came.

“ You, Dick, clear out o’ this. Clear, I say, or I’ll scald ye, same ’s I would a dog,” screamed Mrs. Wilson.

“ Don’t ye git riled, old lady. Tain’t good for yer stummick,” drawled Dick, without rising. “ And as for Do, I reckon you’d better let her alone. She ain’t used to our lovin’ little ways here, and tain’t best ter give her too big a dose ter once. Clear, little un,” continued he, pointing with his thumb to the open stairs leading to the loft where all the girls slept together.

Mrs. Wilson, glaring from one to the other, remained for a moment irresolute whether to first attack son or niece ; and Dora, without waiting for her to decide, walked quietly across the kitchen and up the stairs, leaving mother and son to a short but spirited battle of words, ending in Dick rushing off to “ the grocery ” at the cross roads, declaring, as he slammed the door behind him, that he wished he could go to Bedlam to live, instead of such a house as his own.

CHAPTER VIII.

THAT night, when all was dark and quiet, both within and without the house, a slender little figure came gliding down the stairs and across the kitchen.

With a noiseless hand she slipped back the wooden bolt, unlatched the heavy door, and crept out into the starless night.

It was Dora, who, with a little bundle of clothes in her hand, and her mother's Bible in her bosom, was leaving behind her the only home she could call her own, and going out into the wide world to seek a better one.

Her future course remained perfectly undecided, except that she intended to travel North as fast as possible, and hoped in some way to find out that aunt Lucy, of whom she did not even know the full name and place of abode, but whom she already loved for her mother's sake.

First of all, however, she determined to go and say good by to the old house where she had been born and passed her whole life, except these last unhappy days, and also to her mother's grave.

Walking hastily on, and congratulating herself upon the darkness, she soon reached the house, which was

still untenanted, and sat down for a moment upon the stone step of the kitchen door where she and Tom had been used to sit and eat their supper together, through all their happy childhood.

“And now he is a rebel, and gone to fight, and perhaps he will be killed,” thought Dora, sadly. Presently she took the little Bible from her bosom, and kneeling upon the old step with it tightly clasped in her hands, she prayed simply and fervently to the Father of the fatherless, that he would guard her dear brother, and her father, and herself from all evil and sin, and that in his own good time he would bring them all home to live with the beloved mother who had gone before.

After this, the little girl felt so much happier and safer, that she was sure there must be angels about her, sent by her heavenly Father to comfort and sustain her.

“Perhaps mother herself is here,” thought Dora; and her eager eyes glanced around as if she might really see that dear face shining upon her out of the darkness.

But such sights are not for mortal eyes, and Dora herself soon faintly smiled at her own fanciful hope.

After a few moments she arose, and lightly kissing the closed door of the dear old home, she took up her little bundle, and went slowly down the path.

Near the barn she almost stumbled over a dark figure crouching upon the ground.

“Who’s that?” cried she, involuntarily.

“Gosh, Missy Dory, be dat you?” exclaimed a well-known voice, as the figure straightened itself, as far as was possible.

“Pictor! Why, Pictor, carr it be you?”

“Me mysel’, missy, an’ proper glad to see lilly missy agin,” replied the negro, warmly.

“Well, but, Uncle Pic, how came you here, and where are you going?”

“I’s tell you all ’bout it, missy, fas’ I can, for ’twon’t do fer me to stay long in dese yer diggins. I’s come out on furlough, as we calls it in de army.”

“O, you’re in the army, then?” asked Dora, with a roguish smile.

“Yes, missy, I is. An’ you see we’s in camp jes’ now, ’bout fifty mile from here, an’ gwine ter stop a spell. We’s moved funder off dan we was when me an’ de captin got back, and so I t’ou’t ’fore we moved on agin, I’d borry a hoss, and come back to de ole place for sumfin’ dat I forgot dat mornin’. An’ so yer mammy’s dead, poor lilly missy?”

“Yes, Pictor. How did you know?”

“Lor, missy, I’s seen some of our folks ’bout here, an’ got all de news. An’ I was gwine ter try fer ter see you ’fore I wented back, ’cause I t’ou’t mabbe you wasn’ jist happy down dere, an’ I was gwine to see if ole Pictor, that yèr mammy gib his freedom to, couldn’ do sumfin’ ’bout it.”

"I am not living at aunt Wilson's now," said Dora, quietly. "I have left there."

"Lef' dah! An' whar's ye gwine, missy?" asked Pictor, in much astonishment.

"I don't know. Only I am going North, where my mother's folks live. Perhaps I shall find some of them."

"Yer pore lilly gal!" exclaimed Pic, with a world of tender pity in his coarse voice.

"Why don't you come with me, Pictor?" asked Dora, suddenly, as the idea flashed upon her mind. "You want to go to the North, of course, and very likely, when I find my aunt, she will take you to live with her, too. Won't that be nice?"

"But, lilly missy, how's we gwine fer ter find yer aunty? Do ye know whar she live?"

"No, Pictor, nor I don't know her name, except Lucy; but I guess she lives in Massachusetts. She used to when mother was married."

Epictetus pondered the proposition with a gravity worthy of his namesake. At last he spoke, as one who has made up his mind:—

"Lilly missy, ter go an' look in a big place, like Masserchusetts, for a woman named Lucy, 'ould be jis' like looking in the mowin' for las' year's snow. 'Twouldn't be no use, no how. But now yer wait a minit, an' I'll tell yer how we'll fix it.

"Dese yer sojers dat I's wid, come from de Norf,

an' some of 'em from Masserchusetts. De cap'n dat was to our house dat morning, he's a Masserchusetts man, an' come down here with one of dere regiments, but when de oders went home, he stopped, an' has been fighting 'long o' dese yer fellers.

"Now, missy, yer come 'long back wid me to de camp, an' I'll take keer on ye dere whiles we stop, an' w'en dey goes Norf, w'y, we'll go 'long too. What yer tink o' dat yer for an ole nig's plan, now?"

"That will do, Picter, very well, I should think," said Dora, composedly. "When shall we go?"

"Right off, now, lilly missy. 'Twon't do fer dis chile to be cotched in dese diggins, as I said afore. Tell trufe, lilly missy, I only come fer de ole stockin'."

"What old stocking?" asked Dora, wonderingly.

"W'y, missy, de ole feller has been pickin' up de coppers ebery chance he get, dis many a long year, an' t'ought one dese yer fine days mabbe mas'r take 'em all an' gib him his freedom. Den, when mist's say, 'Go, ole Pic,' all to a sudden t'oder day, ebery ting seem turned upside down, and de silly ole nig scamper off widout so much as tink 'bout de ole stockin' hangin' up in de barn."

"And so you came back to get it?" asked Dora, rather impatiently, for she longed to begin her journey.

"Yis, missy, I's come back fer get it; dat part my arrant, to be sure. Bud den, 'sides dat, I wanted know how lilly missy gittin' 'long, an' wedder de coppers

'ould do some good to she. 'Cause, missy, w'en mist's gib me my freedom right out o' han', it 'ould look orful mean fer me to carry off all de coppers, too, and neber ax wedder lilly missy could help herse'f some way wid dem."

"O, thank you, Uncle Pic," exclaimed Dora, hastily. "But of course I would not for the world take one of them away from you. And how did you know, before you came, that I was at aunt Wilson's?"

"Lor's, missy, 'twas passed along to me, same as all de news is."

"But how, Pictor?"

"Well, missy, de col'ud folks dey don't hab no newspapers nor books, so dey takes a heap o' pains to git de news roun' by word o' mouf. Dey meets nights, an' dey tells ebery'tin' dey know, an' dey has ways, missy, heaps o' ways. Bud now I's all ready for travellin' ef you is."

"I am in a great hurry to start, Pic."

"Sho! be you, lilly missy? Den I's mos' afeard you has'n' be'n ober an' above contented to your aunty's. Pore lilly lamb. Well, ole Pic's gwine ter see ter ye now, an' dere shan't neber no one take ye away from him without you says so you'se'f. Now I jes' go to de barn a minit, an' git my lilly bundle, an' den we goes."

Pictor stole cautiously away through the darkness, and Dora strained her eyes to distinguish once more the dim outline of her old home vaguely drawn against the gloomy

sky. The night wind moaned drearily around its gables, and a whip-poor-will perched upon the tree that swept the roof to chant his mournful cry.

Dora shivered nervously, and murmured, "This isn't home any longer, and aunt's house isn't either. I haven't any home, now; but the Lord and mother will take care of me just the same — so I don't care."

"H'yar we be, missy," whispered Pictor's hoarse voice, as he rejoined his new charge. "Now we's all ready to put, I reckon."

"Do you know the way, Pic, when it's so dark?"

"Neber you fear fer dat, missy. De ole nig fin' he way 'bout, ef it be darker dan ten black cats shuck up in one bag. Den, back here a piece I's got a hoss, a fus' rater, too, dat dey lend me up to de camp. De cap'n tell 'em trust de ole nig same as dey would hese'f."

"Do you mean the captain that was at our house?" asked Dora, who was now tripping along beside the old negro in the direction of the mountains.

"De berry same, missy. He name Cap'n Windsor — Charley Windsor. Don' you min' he tole us ter call 'im Cap'n Karl? Dat de same name as Charley."

"Yes; and I was real glad afterwards that I didn't know his true name, for they asked me, you know."

"No, I didn't know 'bout dat. I heerd dat dey got wind roun' here dat a Yankee officer got away, an' dey was rampin' roun' like mad, lookin' fer 'im; an' ole mas'r was some 'spected, I heerd."

"Father suspected! Why, he brought Joe Sykes and some other men to our house to look, and to ask mother and me questions."

"Yes, yes, chile, I knows all 'bout dat. Dem fellers is part ob de Wigilance Committee, an' mas'r had to fotch 'em to he house wedder he like it or not. Den dey tole him he'd better 'list after mist's died, an' so he did."

"And did you hear all that before you came back?"

"Not all, missy. I seed a boy las' night, w'en I was comin' dis way, dat telled me part. He b'longs to one o' dem Wigilances, an' so heerd de whole story."

"Poor father!" murmured Dora.

"Well, missy, I reckon he didn' want much drivin' to go inter de army. He used ter talk 'bout it by spells, an' say he'd a mind fer ter go."

"Yes, I know it," said Dora, sadly.

"Golly! How dark he am here 'mong de hills. Can't hardly make out de way, now we's lef' de road, but reckon we's right so fer," muttered Pic.

"Where are we going first, Pictor? Where shall we find the horse?" asked Dora, a little anxiously.

"Fin' 'im in he paster, missy. I lef' 'im dah as snug as a bug in a rug, an' de Bible say, 'Safe bind, safe find;' so I boun' him safe 'nouf, I tell ee."

"O, no, Pictor, that isn't in the Bible," said Dora, quite scandalized at the idea.

"Ain't it, now, missy? Well, I heern mist's say so

one day, an' I t'ou't she alluz talk out o' de Bible. Anyways, dem's good words, else she wouldn't say dem."

To this Dora made no reply, and Pictor was now too deeply engrossed in making out their path among the rocks, fallen trees, hillocks, and ravines of the mountain side, to continue the conversation.

Nearly an hour had passed, and the little girl was becoming quite tired, when Pictor stopped short at the foot of a large oak tree, and said, triumphantly, —

"Here we is, Missy Dora."

"Where? I don't see anything but trees, Pictor."

"No more you wouldn' if 'twas cl'ar as noonday, honey; an' now, you couldn' see de king's palace ef 'twas straight afore ye. Bud dis chile knows all 'bout it."

While speaking, the negro had been carefully removing some brush and broken branches, which, had it been light enough to see them, would have appeared to have naturally drifted in between the old oak and a high cliff of mingled rock and gravel just behind it. Under these appeared a large round stone, lying as it might have lain ever since it first became loosened from the face of the cliff in some frosty spring, and rolled to its present position.

But Pictor, after casting a searching look into the darkness surrounding him, applied his strength to this rock, and soon displacing it, showed that it acted as cover to the mouth of a tunnel perhaps two feet in diameter, penetrating the face of the cliff at an acute angle.

“Why, how came that hole there, and where does it go to?” asked Dora, in astonishment.

“He come dere trew much tribberlation an’ hard work, an’ he go to de lan’ o’ promise. A.kin’ ob a short cut ter freedom, dis yer is,” returned Pic, cheerfully. “Now, den, gib us you lilly paw, missy.”

Dora, without hesitation, put her hand in that of Picter, who, after lifting her over the brush and the rock, set her down at the entrance to the tunnel.

“Dere, missy, git down on you han’s an’ kneeses, an’ creep right frew. I’s comin’ right arter, soon’s I fix up de brush an’ stuff fer ter hide de op’nin’. Has ter be mighty keerful ’bout dat.”

With fearless obedience, Dora did as directed, and crept forward some feet into the tunnel, where she paused until the negro had arranged the disguises of his curious refuge to his mind.

“Dere, honey,” said he, at length, “now we’s all right, I reckon. You jis’ go ahead till you gits to de end ob dis yer hole. ’Tain’t so mighty long, arter all, an’ de lan’ ob promise is waitin’ fer us at t’oder end.”

The child made no reply. Indeed, the close air and heavy darkness of the place rendered the mere act of breathing a difficult one, and she had neither strength nor courage for speech.

Keeping on as she was told, it was not many minutes, however, before a waft of fresher air touched her panting

lips, and presently a dim light, at some distance in front, refreshed her aching eyes. Still creeping forward, she came at last to the end of the tunnel, and rising cautiously to her feet, stood beneath the sombre sky in what appeared to be a small, deep valley surrounded on every side by overhanging cliffs.

“Here we be, missy!” exclaimed Pieter, exultantly, as he stood beside her. “Now gib me you han’ again, an’ I’ll fotch you to de cabin.”

Putting her hand in his, Dora was silently led across a little space of grass, to where, beneath the impending brow of one of the crags, a rude hut had been constructed of boughs and small trunks of trees. The door was closed, but yielded to Pic’s hand.

“Dere’s nobbuddy here. Reckon Scip’s gone right ’long,” muttered he, leading in his little companion, and carefully closing the door behind them.

“Now you set right down on dis yer log, missy, an’ we’m hab a fire an’ suffin’ to eat ’före you kin say Jack Robberson,” continued he, cheerily; and Dora, tired, faint, and somewhat frightened at her strange situation, obeyed without a word.

Groping his way to the fireplace at the back of the hut, the negro drew together some half-burned brands, added to them from a pile of brush at the side of the fireplace, lighted them with a match from his pocket, and soon had a cheery fire crackling up the chimney.

“De smoke goes off in de cracks ob de rocks some way. You can’t neber see it f’um below,” explained he, turning round to look at Dora, who sat huddled up in the spot where she had first sunk.

“Pore lilly missy. You’s all beat out, an’ yore cheeks is as white as you’ han’s. Come right up to de fire an’ warm ye, honey. You’s awful tired now, isn’ you?”

“A little tired, Uncle Pic. But I shall soon be rested now. What a funny sort of place this is!”

“I’ll bet you ’tis, missy. To-morrer we’ll look roun’ an’ see it. Now, here’s some beef an’ some bread I lef’ here w’en I comed along. Dem’s Yankee vittles, missy. Tell *you*, dis chile neber tasted nuffin’ sweeter dan de first mou’ful of Yankee beef, dat he eat in de Union camp.”

“And I shall like it, too, Pictor,” said Dora, earnestly; “for I’m going to be a Yankee all the rest of thy life, after once we get among them.”

“Dat right, honey; you an’ Pic cl’ar Yankee f’um dis minit. Now, chile, here’s you bed in dis corner, an’ here’s de bery branket dat mist’s gib to Cap’n Karl dat mornin’ all handy fer ter wrop ye up.

“Now, missy, you ’member dat it tells in de Bible ’bout how you mus’ heave you corn-dodgers inter de water, an’ arter a while dey’ll turn up loaves ob w’ite bread if so be as you has bin good to dem dat stood in need o’ kin’ness.”

“I guess you mean, ‘Cast thy bread upon the waters,



DORA AND OLD PIC IN THE HUT.

and after many days it shall return to thee again' — don't you?" asked Dora, doubtfully.

"Mabbe de words is fix some sich way; but I's got de meanin' fus' rate, 'cause mist's tole me all 'bout it; an' now see, honey, how it's come true 'bout dis yer branket. Mist's had lots on 'em, an' 'twan't no more dan a corn-dodger fer her ter gib; bud now it's come back to her darter w'en she hain't got no oder mortial rag fer ter wrop herse'f in, an' now it's ekill to a thumpin' big loaf o' w'ite bread."

Dora laughed at this queer Scripture reading, and wrapping herself in the blanket, lay down upon her leafy bed, where soon she slept as soundly and as sweetly as if she had still been beneath her father's roof.

As for Pictor, he curled himself up almost in the fireplace, and soon snored portentously.

CHAPTER IX.

THE next morning the weary child slept until Pieter gently shook her by the shoulder, and called her to arise.

“O, good morning, Uncle Pic,” said she, smiling, as she sat up and rubbed her eyes. “Is it late?”

“Well, missy, not so berry late, I reckon, dough I hasn’ got my goold watch on dis mornin’; but breaksus is all ready, an’ a fus’ rate one, too, honey.”

“Is it? What have we got?” asked Dora, merrily, as she jumped up and came towards the fire.

“Mos’ eberyting, honey. Fus’ placé dere’s de soup made out o’ beef an’ hard tack. Dat mighty good w’en it ain’t too salt; and I’s freshened my beef a heap. Den dere’s taters roasted, an’ dere’s a hoe-cake bake, an’ dere’s coffee bilin’, wid sugar in it.”

“Why, Uncle Pic, where *did* you get all these things?” asked the astonished child.

“Well, honey, de beef, an’ de coffee, an’ de sugar, I fotcht from camp, an’ de taters an’ de corn for de hoe-cake I ’fistercated las’ night.”

“Did what, Pic?”

“’Fistercated, honey. Dat’s a bran’-new Yankee word

dat I larn in camp. I can't zackly splain de meanin' on't, but I understands it fus' rate, an' it's an uncommon handy kin' of a word."

Picter chuckled to himself as he lifted the tin kettle of soup off the fire, and Dora, giving up the attempt to understand his joke, inquired,—

"Where can I wash my face, Uncle Pic?"

"Dere, now," cried the negro, in a sort of delighted admiration, "dat's what I calls de effec' ob a good eddication. Here dis bressed lamb gits up in de mornin', an' wot does she ax fer fust? Her breaksus? Not a bit on't. She axes fer water to wash her purty lilly face. Now dat cl'ar buckra. De nigger picaninnies isn't up to dat."

"Why, Uncle Pic, don't you always wash your face in the morning?"

"Alluz, alluz, chile—w'en it handy, an' when I tink ob it, an' de water ain't too cole, an' I ain't too mnch druv up. Bud now I 'spec you an' you mammy wash 'um face ebery single day."

"Why, yes, of course, Picter. I thought everybody alive did."

"Bress de pore lilly child! An' she wor gwine all 'lone to look fur aunt Lucy in de Norf, and didn' know no more 'bout de worl' dan dat ar. Well, well, de Bible say dat Hebbenly Marster takes keer to temper de win' to de shorn lamb, an' I spec he will to dis one."

“I don’t think that’s in the Bible, Pic,” said Dora, doubtfully.

“Lors, chile, dere’s no sasserying ye, ye’re so curus,” retorted Pic good-naturedly. “But you come long o’ me, missy, an’ I’ll show you de baf-room.”

Taking the coffee-pail off the fire, lest it should boil over in his absence, Pictor led the way out into the open air.

Looking about her with some curiosity, Dora saw that she was, as she supposed, in a very deep and narrow valley, hardly more, indeed, than a deep cleft near the summit of a mountain. A narrow strip of verdure ran through it; at one end was the opening through which they had entered, and at the other was the only break in the rocky wall that rose around it to a height of from twenty to fifty feet. This break, or, as it may more properly be described, this slight division between two toppling crags, served as a loophole from whence the fugitives might command a very extended view of the surrounding country. At their feet arose a little bubbling spring, which, after filling its deep, rocky basin, sparkled away in a stream, that, after a course of only a few feet, fell over the edge of the precipice, which seemed to have yawned asunder to allow it room to pass.

Looking carefully down the dashing little waterfall, Dora saw that some twenty feet below her lay another little glen, similar in size and shape to that where she

stood. Through this the waters of the fall, collecting themselves after their leap, danced gayly along until they reached its lower end, when they made their way through another *cañon* so narrow as to leave no room except for their bed, and so sinuous that no one standing at either end could possibly catch a glimpse of the other. The passage was further obstructed at the present time by a good-sized pine tree, which had been cut down and dragged into the bed of the stream.

This little valley, thus fortified, thus watered, and well provided with herbage, was "the pasture" of which Pic had spoken when asked where he had left the horse; and here, at the moment when Dora looked down from her mountain eyry, a fine, strong looking animal of that description was indulging in a roll upon the dewy grass by way of performing his morning toilet.

"And how do we get down there, Pic?" asked Dora, after taking a long survey of the little valley, the horse, the sparkling stream, and the grand view of mountain scenery that stretched away for miles before her.

"Well, dat ruffer a bodder, missy," acknowledged Pic. "You see I t'ou't we was comin' in de same way we come out, an' den I was goin' roun' to fotch out de hoss t'oder way. But now I spects we'm bof got to scrabble down behin' de fall."

"Behind the fall!" echoed Dora.

"Yes, honey. See here, now: dere's a chance to put

you foot on dis yer ledge just b'low here, an' den you stick you fin'ers an' toes in mighty tight, an' gits down to dat' ar nex' one, an' den you kin' o' sidle along an' git right in 'hind de water; an' so you keeps workin' down, one step to a time, till you lan's to de bottom. T'ink you kin do't, lilly missy?"

"Yes, I reckon I can," said Dora, bravely, though she turned a little pale as she carefully scanned the slippery and dizzy path pointed out to her.

"Yer'll have to pull off yer shoe an' 'tockin', missy," resumed Pic, "an' I's 'fraid you'll git orful wet. I's mighty sorry, honey, fer to ax you ter do sich a thin', bud dere ain't no oder way."

"No, I see there isn't, Pictor; and I dare say it won't be half so bad as it looks. I'll try, any way," said Dora, bravely.

"Bress you heart, h'oney! You jes' as brave as a lion, an' jes' as purty as a lamb; an' now you jes' wash you lilly face here to de sprin', an ole Pic'll go see to de breaksus."

CHAPTER X.

THE breakfast was a merry meal, and proved excellent in quality. When it was finished, Dora insisted on washing the few utensils and scouring them as clean as she could, although Pic grumbled at both operations as useless labor, and added, as a final argument, —

“’Sides, dey ain’t use to it, and w’en dey gits it once dey’ll olluz be spectin’ ob it, an’ be jes’ like dat ole hoss doctor’s darters in de Bible, dat was olluz singin’ out, ‘Gib! Gib!’ so I spec’s dere poor daddy had to go roun’ nights an’ pizen de hosses, so’s to cure ’em up nex’ day and get de pay fer doin’ it.”

“Why, Pic!” exclaimed Dora, pausing in her labor upon the coffee-kettle, and looking up at the negro’s grotesque face. “What makes you call it a horse doctor? It says ‘horse leech’ in the Bible.”

“Well, chile, I ax mas’r one day what a leech mean, an’ he say it mean doctor; so hoss leech mean hoss doctor — don’ you see?”

“Why, I don’t believe that is it,” said Dora, meditatively. “But, any way,” continued she, shaking the heavy chestnut curls out of her eyes, “I’ll scour the

kettles now, if they cry, 'Give, give' ever so loud to-morrow."

"Well, den, de pore ole nig mus' take holt too, I specs," said Picter, grumbling good-naturedly, as he grasped his great paw full of ashes, and began to scour lustily at the soup-kettle.

"Ah, ha, Pic! That was the real reason you thought it wasn't best for me to do them," laughed Dora; "you didn't want to help."

"Well, chile, dis ole nig 'ud full as lieves rest afore de fire, an' dat's a fac', an' he kin' o' hate ter see lilly missy's pooty hands all grimmed up wid ashes an' soot, jes' like ole Dinah's. But dat all go wid washin' yore face ebery mornin'. Can't be help, I specs, w'en a body has had a eddication. Dey's buckra ways, I reckons."

By the time the vessels were thoroughly scoured and washed, Pic declared that it was time for dinner, and he proceeded to cook all the remainder of the provisions, that Dora and he might not only eat at that time, but have something to carry as support in the long night march before them.

Dinner over, and the vessels once more cleansed and set aside, Pic suggested that they should each take a nap, and sleep, if possible, until the time should come to start upon their journey.

Dora consented, and lay down upon her bed of leaves, while Picter, as before, curled himself beside the hearth, and was in a few moments fast asleep.

But Dora could not so easily seize irregular repose. For an hour or more she lay almost motionless, watching the fitful firelight that played among the projections and recesses of the irregular walls a fantastic game of "I spy." Then the fire went down, and only curls of thin blue smoke arose from its embers.

Dora softly arose, and was about to lay more wood upon the fire, when a distant sound arrested her attention. It was a confused noise, and Dora could not determine whether it came from the direction of the waterfall, or the tunnel through which they had entered the valley. But it appeared to be approaching, and as any unusual sound was a subject of alarm to the fugitives, Dora hastened to arouse Pictor.

"Eh, what? Wha's 'e matter, chile? Tain't time yit to be movin'. Let 'e ole feller sleep a leetly long'r," muttered the negro, lazily, as he turned upon the other side and prepared to drop off again.

"But, Pictor, Uncle Pic, I say, there's something coming; there's danger, perhaps."

"Somefin' comin'! Danger!" repeated Pictor, starting to his feet and rubbing his eyes. "Whar! whar's de danger, missy? Reckon you foolin' you ole uncle, honey, ain't you! 'Fraid he obersleep hese'f."

"No, no, indeed, Pictor. Just listen now — there, what is that sound in the tunnel?"

Pictor now listened anxiously enough, for the sounds

growing louder every minute, evidently came from the direction of the tunnel. Carefully leaving the cabin, he crossed the little glade to the entrance of the subterranean passage, and stood for some minutes with his neck outstretched and his ears alert, while his eyes wildly rolled first towards the hut and Dora's watchful little figure standing in the doorway, and then within the gloomy chasm at whose entrance he stood.

Presently he softly entered the tunnel, and disappeared from sight.

A few minutes passed, and Dora, almost holding her breath from anxiety, softly approached the dark passage, and peered within. She saw nothing; but in another moment Pictor noiselessly crept to her side, and hoarsely whispered, —

“ 'Tis de Philistums, honey! Dey is upon us, an' dis ole fool 'ould ha' laid still till dey come an' cut off ebery ha'ar he's got, same's dey did to Samson, ef 't hadn' been for lilly missy. But de wus ob de whole is, dey's got a dog. Spec dey's been way down to Pete Flanders, and borried his'n. Dere ain't no one else 'bout here has got one — ”

“ No one got a dog? ”

“ Not a bloodhoun', missy. Dat's what dey's got up dah. I knows his bay. It's diff'ent from any oder dog. Spec God made all de dogs, and de debil made bloodhoun's. Don' know else how it happen dat he's de only one dat'll eat a nigger.”

“But, Pic, we ain’t going to stay here and wait for them—are we?” said Dora, impatiently. “Come, let us go to the waterfall, and get out on the ledge, and then, when they are in the tunnel here, we can climb down to where the horse is, and so get off. I can climb any where that you can, I know. Come, here’s the bundle of food—we must take that. Why don’t you start, Pic?”

The negro looked at her with admiring wonder.

“Lors, now,” said he, “how many pooty lilly gals, I won’er, ’ould talk dat a way, sich a time as dis. Mos’ all on ’em would screech an’ holler fit to kill deyse’fs, an’ let all de folks out dah know jes’ who’s inside here. Dis is what comes o’ eddication, I reckon.”

“But, Pic, I say,” reiterated Dora, almost angrily, “why *don’t* you do something?”

“W’y, honey, ’tain’t time yet. Dat’s w’y. Ef dem fools up dah sen’s in de dog—golly, dey’s done it a’ ready.”

Dropping to his hands and knees, Pic began to creep up the tunnel as he spoke, and Dora followed more cautiously. About half way, as well as she could judge, she overtook him lying motionless and listening intently. The sounds now distinctly heard were the voices of men talking eagerly, and the occasional hoarse sound of a muffled howl from the hound.

“Dey’s muzzlin’ him. I ’specs dey knows you’s in

here, and doesn' want he should t'ar ye. Dey doesn' muzzle um w'en dey's chasin' niggers," muttered Pieter

"Well, what are you going to do? He'll be down here in a minute, and the men after him. Can't I do something — can't you tell me, Pieter?"

"Put out you han', missy. Here, dis way."

Dora did as directed, and found that the tunnel beyond Pic's position was closed by a barrier, made apparently of small saplings, bound together closely with withes.

"But this won't stop him long," whispered she; "he'll jump at it till he knocks it down, or at any rate till the men come up. It won't stop them."

"Wait, den, honey. Feel here, now."

"A rope — two ropes! What are they for?"

"Now I'll tell you, missy. W'en dat howlin', tearin' debil up dah gets to dis gate, he'll be as mad as hops, an' he'll howl, an' yelp, an' run back'ards and for'ards. Bud dat ain't de wust dat'll happen to um; fer w'en he begins to do dat ar', dis chile will pull de rope, jus' like um hangman pull de leetly cord dat let de drop fall, an' wow! whar dat debil's pup fin' hese'f den?"

"Why, what will happen to him, Pic?"

"Jes you wait a lilly minit, missy, an' you'll see," replied the negro, who had all the taste of his race for melodrama, and did not intend to spoil the grand "effect" he was preparing, by describing it beforehand.

Dora was too breathless and too excited to insist upon an explanation, and waited silently beside Pic, grasping the hurdle with one cold little hand, and listening with both her ears.

The voices above, confused by the distance into one hoarse sound, reverberated sullenly along the sides of the tunnel ; but no single voice or words could be distinguished. The hound bayed no longer, but his fierce growl was distinctly audible. All at once a sudden shout was heard, followed by a profound silence.

Then came the patter of the dog's feet, mingled with exultant yelps, as he pressed forward upon the scent. He was evidently approaching fast.

“Now, den, chile. Here um debil, an' hear um mas'r hangmana' ready for um,” whispered Pieter, hoarsely, as he grasped the ropes in either hand, and braced his foot against the centre of the hurdle.

The hound reached the spot. He paused a moment, whining impatiently, and running from side to side. Then scenting his prey close at hand, he became furious, bounding against the gate with all his force, growling fiercely, and tearing at the ground with his paws. Through the hurdle Dora could see the red gleam of his eyeballs, and smell his fetid breath.

“Dat right, you debil dog,” muttered the negro, in great excitement. “Dat de way to dance ; golly ! Don' dis chile want to see yer dancin' roun' in de fire down

b'low dah, whar you's gwine! Specs, dough, yer'll be ter home dah, 'long wid you daddy. Dat's it! Scratch um groun'; tear 'im wid you paw! Don' you jes' wish 'twas ole nig you war tearin'! Now, den, trot back a leetly mite, take fresh start! Dat's 'it; now um time fer mas'r hangman! He-o!"

As he uttered the last exclamation, Picter, bracing his foot afresh, pulled suddenly and strongly at the two ropes twisted about his brawny hands.

A crash, a heavy fall, the rattle and plunge of an avalanche of stones and earth, accompanied by suffocating clouds of dust, followed the action.

A yelp of agony, a smothered whine from the hound, ensued, and then all was still, and even darker than before.

Picter seized Dora by the arm, and hurried her back into the open air, where they were pursued by the pungent dust of the earth-fall.

"Dah! Tank de Lor' dat all done safe!" gasped Picter, as he sank upon the withered grass. "Now we'm got noffin' ter do but wait till dem folks is gone, and den get out t'oder way."

"But if they find the other way?" whispered Dora, after they were safe once more in the hut, with the door closed.

"Dey won't, chile. Dey neber 'ud ha' foun' dis, on'y fer de houn'. T'oder way, de houn'couldn' help um if

dey had him, cause it's trough runnin' water. An' I reckon *dat* houn' won't neber t'ar down a nigger agin, not if he was clost afore 'im."

"What was it, Pieter? What did the ropes do?" asked Dora, with a sort of breathless terror in her voice.

"Well, honey, w'en dis place was fix up fer a sort o' refuge fer us poor col'ud folks, eber so long ago, we t'aut like enough some day we might be tracked in wid houn's. An' so, in de tunnel, we fix a kin' ob trap-door ober head, wid lots o' dirt an' big stones atop, an' big sticks a holdin' it up underneaf. Den we tied ropes to de foot o' dem big sticks, an' fix de gate jes' dis side ob de trap.

"So w'en I went up fus' time, an' foun' out w'at was to pay, I jes' put up de gate, an' fotch de ends ob de ropes trew. So den, w'en de ole houn' wor jes' about under de middle, I gib um hangman pull, an' wow! down he come ker-smash, de trap fus', an' all de stones an' dirt atop. Reckon dat dog am flatter dan a hoe-cake 'bout dis time. Hi! I'd like 'o look at um."

"O, Pieter, how can you!" cried Dora, in horror.

"Can what, missy? Kill um?"

"No, that was all right. But to want to see him now."

"W'y not den, missy. I hate um like de bery debil hese'f. I kill um; I want ter see um dead, an' kick um a leetly bit p'raps."

“But, Pic, how can you want to see him all mashed and mangled as he is? O, I wouldn’t look at him for a hundred dollars.”

“Wouldn’ you now? Lors, dat kin’ o’ curus. Dat goes ’long wid washin’ you face, and scourin’ de coffee-kettle, I specs. Buckra ways, all buckra ways,” said Pictor, looking at Dora with the same sort of admiring wonder that he frequently displayed for her.

“Well, nigger ways is good enough fer ole Pic, but he like to see buckra ways in lilly missy. Dat all right, I specs.”

“O, yes, that’s all right, Uncle Pic; but don’t you think there’s any danger at all now?” asked the child, rather anxiously.

“No, honey. Dey couldn’ fin’ out de oder way, not if dey was lookin’ a week; not even if dey got inter de hosses’ paster down by de waterfall, fer yer can’t see noffin’ w’en yer look up from de foot.”

“Well, then, we have only to wait till these men have gone, and it is dark.”

“Dat’s um, honey. Now, s’pose yer tell ole Pic some ob dem pooty stories yer mammy use ter tell you an’ Mas’r Tom in de winter ebenin’s.”

“Well, I will. Or, Pictor, wouldn’t you rather have me read a little to you out of the Bible? I have got mother’s own little Bible here in my bosom.”

‘Yes, missy, I like dat fus’ rate. Dere ain’t no stories

ekill to dem in de Bible, arter all. I like um jes' as well as fairy story."

"You ought to like them better, Pictor," said Dora, earnestly, "because they are all true, and it is God's own book, the Bible is."

"Lors, yes, missy, I know dat. I knows heaps 'bout de Bible—lots o' pooty sayin's out ob it. Read me 'bout Dan'l in de lion den, missy. Spec's dat ar houn' wus dan any dem lions. Wouldn' ha' cotcht 'im lettin' Dan'l alone!"

CHAPTER XI.

WE must now go back for a few hours to the dawning of the day whose evening found Dora in the mountain cabin, reading the story of Daniel to old Pic.

When Mrs. Wilson shrilly summoned her daughters to arise, she called Dora's name with the rest.

"Dora ain't here," sleepily replied Louisa.

"Ain't there! Where is she, then?"

"I don't know, I'm sure."

"Don't you know, Jane?"

"No, ma'am."

"She's gone out, I reckon. The door's unbolted," suggested Sam, one of the younger boys, who had risen early to go fishing.

"Gone a walkin' for her health 'fore breakfast, I reckon," sneered Mrs. Wilson. "Ef she ain't back pooty soon, I can tell her she'll get more walk than breakfast. I don't believe in no such ways."

The breakfast passed, and was cleared away. Mrs. Wilson's displeasure at her niece's absence became a sort of angry alarm, as the day went on, and brought no tidings of her. Just before noon, Sam, returning from

his fishing, brought to his mother a little bow of cherry-colored ribbon.

“There’s the bow Dora had pinned on her gown yesterday — ain’t it?” drawled he.

“Yes, I b’lieve so. Whar’d ye git it?” asked Mrs. Wilson.

“In the yard of their old house. I come acrost it coming from the brook, and ’bout half way I see this in the path, and fetched it home. Ain’t she got back yet?”

“No,” said his mother, slowly, as she stood with her eyes fixed upon the bit of ribbon.

“So she went up to the old house all ’lone, ’fore light. Where’d she go next, I’d like to know,” said she to herself. “Whar’s your daddy, Sam, and whar’s Dick loafing now, when he might be o’ some use?”

“They’re coming up to the house, ma’am, this minit, and a strange man and a big dog ’long with ’em.”

Mrs. Wilson peeped out at the window.

“It’s Pete Flanders and his hound,” said she. “I s’pose dad’s brought him home to dinner; and here’s the vittles won’t be done this half hour. ’Clare for’t, I wish Cephas ’ud let me know ’fore he brings folks home.”

The men now entered, and Mr. Wilson somewhat sheepishly informed his wife that Mr. Flanders would stay to dinner with them.

The dame went through some form of welcome, not of

the heartiest, and then proceeded, with the help of her daughters, to lay the table and dish the dinner.

When they were seated, she mentioned her anxiety at Dora's prolonged absence, and also the clew to her movements given by the cherry-colored bow.

"We can track her from that spot easy enough with old Vixen," said Flanders, eagerly.

"The hound? But he'd hurt her," said Mrs. Wilson, dubiously.

"Lord, ma'am, we'd muzzle him. He couldn't hurt a babby then, 'cept by knockin' of it down."

"You could hold him in a leash too, last part of the way, couldn't you?" asked Dick.

"'Course I could. The gal shan't get hurt, and perhaps we shall kill both birds with the same stone."

"What two birds?" Mrs. Wilson inquired; and her husband and his guest went on to tell her that Scipio, one of Joe Sykes's "niggers," had run away on the preceding night, and that Joe had asked Mr. Wilson to go after Flanders and his dog to hunt him. Arriving at Wilson's house just at dinner time, they had stopped there first.

More than this, Dick Wilson, who had been over at Mr Sykes's house in the morning, said that one of the boys upon the place had been overheard saying to another that he "reckoned Scip had gone off with Pic Darley;" but though the lad had been strictly exam-

ined, and finally put to the torture of the lash to make him confess that he had seen Pictor, nothing could be extorted from him more than that he "thought like enough Pic had been round," but did not know it certainly.

"I never see anything like the imperdence of niggers nowadays," remarked Mr. Flanders, indignantly.

"There ain't no gittin' at the truth, no how, 'thout you cut it right out o' their hides."

"Golly! I reckon you'd 'a thought Joe cut deep enough inter that boy's hide this morning, but he didn't come to the truth," drawled Dick.

"That's cause there wan't no truth in him, I expect," said Louisa, with the air of one who utters a witticism.

"Truth," chimed in her mother, "I'll put all the truth you'll find in a nigger inter my right eye, and shan't go blind with it nuther. I never b'lieve a word they say, and I tell 'em so straight out."

"It's no wonder they lie to you then," growled Dick, who was quite willing to argue against himself for the sake of opposing his mother.

Dinner was now ended, and the men and dog all hurried away to Joe Sykes's house, to begin the exciting slave-hunt that they had prepared for.

But no clew could be gained to the starting-point of the fugitive, who was, indeed, at that moment snugly concealed in the great barn, having judged it best to

wait there until the pursuit, that he well knew would be vigorously conducted, should be over, and the country quiet, when he intended to steal away.

This little plan it may be as well to mention, was afterwards carried out with perfect success, and the "boy" (aged about forty) escaped to the Union lines, and some time afterwards carried a musket at the battle of Milliken's Bend.

The hunt, so far as he was concerned, was an entire failure; but Mr. Flanders, determined to lose no opportunity of turning an honest penny, now offered his services to Mr. Wilson at a reduced rate, for, as he facetiously remarked, —

"Chillen is alluz half price, you know."

"Well, I don't suppose you'll have to travel very far," replied Mr. Wilson, who was incapable of taking even so mild a joke as that offered by the slave-hunter.

"And if old Pic has been about, it's as likely as any way that he'd harbor at the old place; and maybe Dora went there to meet him, and they've took off together," suggested Dick, who had been in a brown study ever since dinner-time.

This idea was hailed by his companions as little short of inspiration, and Dick received various rough compliments upon the brilliancy and penetration of his mind.

"Waal, it takes some eyesight to see inter the middle of a millstone, that's certain; but then, when you git to

thinking, why, sometimes it seems as if you could figger out most anything," returned the lad, with a modest pride, very refreshing to behold.

"Waal, let's git to work. It'll be sundown one o' these days," interposed Flanders, who felt that his own importance must not be suffered to fade out of the public mind.

The party accordingly adjourned to the spot where Sam Wilson had picked up the little bow. Here a shoe of Dora's was given the dog to smell of, and he was then laid upon the scent.

This he immediately lifted, and set off at such speed that the men could hardly keep him in sight.

Dick again suggested that he should be held in leash or muzzled; but the slave-hunter objected that either of these measures would retard the chase, and that there could be no danger, as the child would not be in the open road within a few miles of home.

"She'll be hid up somewhere—in a cave, or up a tree, or somewheres like that, where Vixen couldn't reach her. Besides, if the nigger's with her, we don't want the hound muzzled, and Vixen wouldn't tech a white gal; she knows better'n that, 'specially when there's nigger to be got. She's trained fust rate, that dog is, though I say it as shouldn't say it," said Mr. Flanders, modestly.

'Well,' retorted Dick, drawing a revolver from his

breast pocket, "all I've got to say is, that I'm going to keep at that dog's heels, and if he offers to touch Dora, supposing we find her, I shall just put a bullet through his head for you."

"Reckon you'd better not do that, young man, 'thout you've got fifty dollars in your other pocket. That dog ain't to be shot for nothing."

"Nor my cousin ain't going to be worried like that poor wench of Sykes's that you caught two year ago for him. She died 'fore they got her home, she did."

"Yes, that was kind o' unfortnit," said Flanders, in a lower voice. "But the fool might 'a clim a tree or sunthin', and got out of his way. Wha' 'd she want to stop right on the ground for?"

"I don' know nothing 'bout that, but this I do know. If that dog flies at Dora, it'll be the last fly he'll ever make," returned Dick, emphatically, as he set off after the dog, on a long lope, that could evidently be kept up by so active a young fellow as Dick for a long period.

The others followed more slowly, two or three on horseback, the less fortunate on foot.

The hound mutely followed the trail of the fugitives in all its many windings, and Dick mentally concluded, from its irregular and capricious course, that it had been traversed in the darkness of night.

"Poor little Do," thought he, "I wonder if she wa'n't scart. I 'most hope old Pic was with her. By George.

if he is, and she seems to care about him, I'll give him a chance to make off before the others come up."

This benevolent intention was still fresh in the young man's mind, when the hound stopped beneath the old oak, concealing the entrance to the tunnel, and uttered an impatient howl, followed by a furious bark.

"She's tree'd 'em!" exclaimed Dick, hurrying up, and looking eagerly into the tree.

"Say, Dora!" called he softly, "if you're up there, speak quick. No one ain't going to hurt you while I'm round, and if you've got Pic with you, I'll give him a chance to get off before the rest come up."

To this proposal there was, of course, no reply, and Dick now perceived that the dog was tearing at the brush and broken branches wedged between the rock and tree. He at once concluded that there must be a cave in this rock, and that the brush concealed its entrance. He hastened to drag away the obstructions, but, to his great surprise, the face of the cliff was perfectly smooth and unbroken. The dog also appeared somewhat puzzled, but still persisted in clinging to the little space between the oak and the cliff, and whimpering with impatience at not finding it possible to pursue the trail.

The rest of the party now came up, and the united wisdom of the whole finally succeeded in solving the problem. The large stone was pushed aside, the tunnel discovered, and every one drew back a little, expecting

a shot or desperate charge from within, for all were now agreed that the little girl could not be alone.

Nothing of the kind happened, however, and after a moment or two, Dick boldly advanced, and looked into the opening.

“Golly, that’s curious!” exclaimed he. “There’s a hole here jist like a fox-hole. I reckon they’ve burrowed down and hid since they heard us outside.”

All now crowded forward to look, and for some moments nothing was to be heard but a confused wrangle of voices, each one suggesting his own opinion or advice, and rudely contradicting that of every one else.

“Waal, they’re in there safe enough,” said Flanders, at length; “now who’s going down to fetch ’em out? I can p’int to a man as ain’t. I hain’t got no fancy fer havin’ my throat cut by a nigger in a dark hole like this’n. I’ll send in the pup if you say so, or you may go yourself, young man, sence you’re so tender of the gal getting scared.”

Dick, without reply, advanced a little way into the tunnel, and called repeatedly to Dora, promising safety and protection both then and at home if she would only come out to him, and suggesting that if she refused, the dog would next be sent to summon her, and might prove a less considerate messenger than himself.

To this artful harangue there was naturally no reply, as none of it reached the ears of any one but the speaker, and Dick presently reappeared, somewhat disappointed.



HUNTING THE FUGITIVES, UNCLE PIC AND DORA.

“There’s no one there,” said he, sulkily. “The dog has got off the right scent, and been trailing a fox or a badger, I reckon.”

“Foxes and badgers ain’t so curus about shutting their front doors when they go to bed,” sneered Flanders.

“The stuff’s blow’d in sence the hole was given up, I reckon,” said Dick, hastily.

“*My* dawg don’t run on a last year’s trail of a fox or badger, when he’s sot on the fresh trail of a human,” said Flanders, with offended dignity.

“Muzzle the hound, and send him in, Flanders,” interposed Wilson. “He’ll soon tell us what’s inside.

To this proposition, after some further discussion, every one agreed; and Vixen, after a little encouragement from her master, plunged into the tunnel and disappeared. The men followed cautiously, and paused before they had quite lost sight of daylight.

The muffled cries of the dog soon announced that she had met with some obstacle; but before the listeners had decided upon the nature of this, the sudden rush and crash of Pieter’s land avalanche, and the clouds of dust accompanying it, drove them tumultuously from the entrance; nor did one of them care to reënter it, even to ascertain the fate of the hound, whose loss Flanders loudly and somewhat indignantly lamented.

A long and heated discussion of these events, contin-

ued even after the party were seated in friendly conclave at "the grocery," where they spent the evening, resulted in the almost unanimous conclusion that Dora and Pieter had been hidden in the cave, which was supposed to be of small extent, and that upon the approach of the dog, they had made some effort to escape by climbing its sides, that had brought the whole down upon their heads, burying themselves and the hound in a common grave.

So Mrs. Wilson entered into undisturbed possession of the orphan's heritage, and did not find it so satisfactory as she had expected.

CHAPTER XII.

“DAT mighty pooty story, missy; but I reckon dem lions had got a bite ob sumfin’ ’fore Dan’l was frowed in, or they wouldn’t ha’ been so ’commodatin’ as ter hold off till de ole king change he mind.”

“Why, Pictor, it was a miracle that made them,” explained Dora, earnestly.

“Meracle, missy? Well, it seems to dis ole fool dat meracles mos’ly has got two sides to ’em; an’ some folks, mos’ly chillen an’ women, on’y look to one side, whilst we dat am men folks ’sider bof.”

Dora, rather offended both at the incredulity and the line of argument, said nothing, but, turning over the leaves of her Bible, read here and there a verse to herself. Pictor watched her furtively for a while, and then added, coaxingly,—

“Bud, den, missy, yore mammy tole me once dat we wasn’ to be saved by our own wisdom, bud by faith; so, p’r’aps, after all, you stan’s a better chance dan I does.”

To Pictor’s surprise, Dora abruptly closed her book, and laughed outright—a merry, girlish laugh, such as had not come from her pale lips for many a week before;

but the idea of Picter's wisdom standing in the way of his spiritual advancement, struck her as an uncommonly funny one.

"Well, dear old Uncle Pic," said she, after a moment of merriment, "if your wisdom will get us safely out of this valley, and to the Union camp, I won't ask it to do any more. We can talk about Daniel and the lions another time."

"Yes, missy, I specs 'tis 'bout time to be movin'," replied Pic, with such readiness one would almost have suspected him to be glad of an excuse for withdrawing from the argument.

Dora, with a quiet smile, occupied herself in putting together the things they were to carry with them, and leaving the cabin in such order as must have much surprised the next comer.

Pic, meantime, went out to reconnoitre, and at the end of about half an hour returned with a beaming countenance.

"All right, missy," said he, joyfully. "Dey's cl'ared, horse, foot, an' dragons, as we says in de army. We're all right now; bud it's comin' on awful cold, an' you mus' take de branket to wrop roun' your lilly shoul'ers. Tell 'e what, missy; 'tain't a loaf, bud a hull bakin' o' white bread we's a gittin' fer dat corn-cake yer mammy frowed inter de water w'en she gib 'um branket to Captain Charley."

“ Well, then, I’ll put it on for a shawl ; but what will you do, Pic? Won’t you be cold?”

“ Neber fear fer dis chile, missy. I got big sojer coat, dat one ob our fellers pick up arter de battle ob de Elk Water. De ole rebs didn’ stay to pack up dey trunks dat time, dey lef’ in sech a hurry. Now here’s de saddle for de ole hoss. Guess I’ll frow it down fus’.”

“ And here are the bread and meat in this bundle, and there are some cold roasted sweet potatoes. Shall we want them, do you think?”

“ Lors, yis, missy, dem’s fus’ rate ; I’d like to eat ha’f a dozen dis bressed minit. Here, I’ll put dem in my pocket, an’ you can carry de bundle till I gits red o’ dis saddle,—after dat I’ll take it ; and de branket we’ll frow ’long o’ de saddle. We don’ want noffin’ to carry w’en we gits to scam’lin’ down dem rocks.”

All was now ready for departure, and Pieter, after standing at the door a few minutes to listen for any alarming sound, announced that all was safe ; and, carefully closing the door of the cabin, he proceeded, followed by Dora, to the edge of the cliff, and threw down into the valley the various articles carried by each, including Dora’s shoes and stockings and Pieter’s brogans.

He then stepped down to the first ledge, and, so soon as his feet were set upon the second, directed Dora to follow, he remaining near enough to help and protect her very considerably in the perilous descent. The child,

with neither complaint nor exclamation of any kind, did exactly as she was bid; and, after ten or fifteen minutes of anxious exertion, the two found themselves in safety upon the dry ground at the foot of the fall.

“Now, den, missy, dat’s all ober, an’ you’s de bestest lilly lady in dese U-nited State fer doin’ it so nice and quiet. I’s ’fraid you’d holler; an’ dat ’ud ha’ scared me, and spilte us bof. Now, here’s de branket, an’ you jes’ wrop youse’f all up in it, an’ set down here till I gits de hoss ready. Isn’ you awful wet?”

“No, I’m not very wet; but I wan’t to see how you’ll catch the horse. I don’t believe you can,” said Dora, slyly.

“Dat ’cause you don’ know, chile,” said Pictor, a little indignantly. “Dere ain’t no bother ’bout cotchin’ dis yer hoss, any way, w’en dis yer nigger is de one to cotch um.”

So saying, Pictor picked up the bridle, which he had thrown down with the saddle, and marched directly up to the horse, who had left off feeding, and stood with head erect watching him.

“Here, ole Jump, I’s gwine to put on yer bridle, now. Specs yer hasn’ had sech a bellyful sence yer come to de war, ’fore. Now’s de time to pay for it, ole boy.”

But Jump, although he may have agreed with his temporary master’s opinion as to the abundance of his two days’ feast, was disposed to differ with him as to the

propriety of leaving it. As Pictor boldly approached, bridle in hand, Jump, with a wild snort, suddenly wheeled, and lashed out with his hind legs in a decidedly dangerous manner.

“W’y, you ole cuss!” exclaimed Pictor in great wrath, as he sprang backward to escape the kick. “Am dat all de manners you got, arter I’s been so good to ye? Jes’ you wait till I gits back ter camp, and see if I doesn’ berry de higgest pa’r o’ spurs dere is goin’, an’ ride ye up an’ down dat mountain till ye hollers, ‘Nuff said.’”

“Ha, ha, ha!” laughed Dora, gleefully. “O, Pic, you’ll kill me right out! O, Pic! the horse hallooing ‘Nuff said’! Do the Yankee horses talk, Pictor?”

“Don’t ee, missy, don’t!” expostulated Pictor, almost crossly. “How can I talk sense w’en you keeps a ‘stractin’ my ‘tention? You jes’ creep inter de tree dah, out de way, chile. Mabbe de ole fool’ll go ter kickin’ dat way nex’.”

“But why don’t you catch him, Pictor, the same way you always do? I thought there wasn’t any bother about it, you said,” continued Dora, mischievously, while she nestled herself into the branches of the pine that closed the passage.

To this little jibe Pic made no reply, while, with alternate threats and coaxing, he applied himself seriously to the task of catching the horse.

But Jump, on this occasion if never before, made good his claim to his peculiar name, and indulged in a series of leaps, curvets, plunges, rearings, and prancings, that would have done credit to a mustang of the prairies.

At last, however, he seemed suddenly to consider that this course, although pleasant at the time, might not be of advantage to his future comfort, when he should finally be obliged to submit to the halter; or else he had become tired of the performance. At any rate, he all at once stood still, and allowed Pieter to approach and put the bridle over his head without making the slightest resistance.

“Now, den, you ole brack debil!” exclaimed the wrathful negro, so soon as he could gather breath enough to speak. “W’at you spec I’s gwine to do wid ye, now? You ’sarve to hab ebery boue you’s got broke inter twenty t’ousan’ pieces, an’ hab yer skin all cut off ob dem arterwards; an’ I’s a great mind ter do it.”

“But how should we get to the camp, if you did, Pieter?” asked a merry voice from the pine tree.

“Shore ’nough, chile; an’, arter all, de pore beast didn’ mean no harm; but lors, how he did cut up! Real r’dic’lous, now, wa’n’t it?” replied the good-natured negro, in whose mind the laughable side of the little skirmish between himself and Jump had already overcome the annoyance, and before he had finished buckling the saddle-girths he was obliged to stop and roll on the grass in a

paroxysm of laughter at the memory of some of the horse's gambols.

Dora joined in the laugh, but presently recalled to Pictor's attention the necessity of getting started, at least, upon their journey, before it should be quite dark, as the first miles of their road lay through the forest, and among the mountains, where it would be very easy to get lost, especially by night.

"Neber fear, missy; de star gwine to be orful bright, an' dey's jes' de same as hebenly guide-boards, 'specially to us cullud folks, dat couldn' read de guide-board, an' can read de stars, 'specially de norf star. Spec dat star was made o' purpose ter help de poor niggers to dere freedom. How many Gospels is dere in de New Tes'ament, missy?"

"Four."

"Well, de norf star makes five; and seein' dat, makes it easy to berieve all the res'," said Pictor, meditatively.

"Come, then, Uncle Pic, let's set out to travel towards it," replied Dora, gently.

"Dat you, missy. We's trabellin' for de norf star, all ob us, brack an' w'ite; fer dere's many a mas'r an' mist's dat don' git dere freedom till dey's travelled clear off de earth, an' git 'mongst de stars. Yore own mammy was one o' dat sort, honey."

"Don't let us talk about that, Pictor," said Dora, softly; for although she knew, even better than the negro, that

her mother's married life and associations had been little better than bondage, she felt it a profanation and an indelicacy to speak of it, or even to allow the faithful old servant to do so.

Picter, with native tact, understood her feeling, and made no reply.

The horse was now ready, and the pine tree being thrown aside, he quietly allowed himself to be led through the bed of the stream, and into the valley that lay beyond.

Dora followed, and sat down upon the bank to put on again her shoes and stockings.

"Now then, Uncle Pic, all ready for the line of march," said she gayly, as she sprang to her feet.

"All ready, honey," replied the negro, lifting her to an extemporized pillion behind the saddle, and then heavily mounting himself.

"Now den, ole Jump! Hol' fas', missy!" and through the clear twilight of the October evening the weather-beaten old slave and the slender, bright-eyed little girl set out together to travel towards the north star.

CHAPTER XIII.

“ You never have told me yet where we are going, Pictor,” said Dora, as they jogged along at an easy rate. “ Where is the Yankee camp ? ”

“ On de top of what dey call Cheat Mountain, chile,” said Pic, with much importance. “ W’en me an’ Cap’n Charley got away, he tol’ me dat we should fin’ some sojers dah, dough I b’lieve dey wasn’t de ones dat he rightly belong to ; but he ain’t in no rig’lar comp’ny jes’ now, ’cause his’n has gone home. Bud he ’scribed de place to me, an’ I know’d how to get dere fus’ rate, an’ showed um de way.”

“ And are there many soldiers there ? ”

“ Heaps on em, chile. Dey isn’t all in one camp, you knows, but ebery rigimint by hese’f. Our rigimint is de — Ohio. Dat’s de one dey put Cap’n Charley into, soon’s we got dah.”

“ And what do you do, Pictor ? Do you fight ? ”

“ Well, no, honey, I hasn’ done any fightin’ yit. I helps do de cookin’ mos’ly, so fur. ’Tain’t no use fer sojers try to fight we’n dey starvin’ ; so I reckon de fel-

ler dat does de cookin' is, af'er all, de one dat wins de battle, fer 'twould be lost shore widout him."

"To be sure it would," assented Dora, smiling. "They ought to call you general, at least, Pict'er."

"Well, honey, I's 'fraid my wirtue is more pertic'lar dan general, so fur," said Pic. "Bud now, missy, I wants to tell yer sumfin'. S'posin' we meets one ob de rebels, or any one but a Linkum sojer, we's got ter 'xplain who we is, an' what we'm about. Now, I reck'n dis yer'll be de safes' story, 'sides not bein' any lie. I'll tell um you's my lilly mist's; dat my ole mist's is done gone dead, an' my mas'r fightin' in- de army; an' my mist's, 'fore she died, said dat de chile was to go lib long ob her aunty, jes' leetly way norf ob here. Den dey'll ax fer pass, mabbe, an' you'll speak up real peart an' say, 'What fer my nigger want a pass, when he got his mist's 'long wid him. He my sarvent, an' trabelin' 'long o' me. Dat's 'nough.'"

"Well, that's all true enough, Pict'er; but it would be deceiving them to tell it," said Dora, rather doubtfully.

"'Ceivin', missy! Lord, ef we don't have ter do no wus deceivin' dan dat ar, 'fore we gits to camp, we'm lucky fellers; dat all I got to say. Why, yore own mammy 'ud lie up hill an' down, 'fore she'd let you be took now, an' kerried back, let alone ole Pic."

"Do you think so, Pict'er?"

"I knows it, missy. It say in de Bible dat de end justerfy de means."

"O, no, Pic; that isn't in the Bible at all," said Dora, decidedly.

"Well, if 'tain't, it oughter be, fer it's de truf," asserted Pictor, doggedly. "Now mind, honey, an' tell de story straight, an' face it out dat it's de truf right frew, fer ef we'm took, dey'll kerry you back to your aunty Wilson, an' poor ole Pic, dat comed back a purpose to fotch ye away, will git licked to def, p'raps."

"O, Pictor, how horrid! Yes, I am sure mother would think it was worse to let that happen, than to deceive the rebels. But I don't want to tell any lies."

"Neber fear, missy; I'll do all de lyin' fer bof ob us. 'Twon't hurt me a mite."

Dora, instead of replying, fell into a puzzled reverie upon the question of speaking the exact truth at all times, and under all circumstances, and longed, as she had longed many a time before, to be able to go to her dear mother's side, and lay all her doubts and troubles before her.

The night went on. The great constellations rose, climbed the summit of the heavens, and sank. The air grew chill and heavy, and the eyes of the poor, tired child dropped together with weariness. Laying her head upon Pictor's broad shoulders, and clinging to his belt, she slept soundly, wrapped in her blanket, and was

sweetly dreaming of home and mother, when she was suddenly aroused by the halt of the horse, and a stern voice demanding, —

“Who goes there?”

“Now fer it! Missy, missy, wake up, an’ git yer wits about ye,” whispered Pic hoarsely, and in the same breath answered aloud to the challenge, —

“Lor, mas’r sojer, ’taint on’y mist’s an’ me.”

“Who is your mistress? Let her speak,” said the sentinel, after a little pause.

“Miss Jones her name. She right here on de hoss ’long o’ me.”

“What do you want, Miss Jones, in this camp?” asked the sentinel, courteously.

“I don’t want anything in camp,” replied Dora, steadily. “I am travelling to the northern part of the state with my servant, and we didn’t know of a camp about here.”

“Why, that’s a child’s voice,” exclaimed the sentinel, abruptly. “How old are you, Miss Jones?”

“Twelve years old.”

“And travelling alone at night with this negro! How’s that?” asked the man, suspiciously, as he peered through the dim, gray light of dawn at the horse and riders.

“We are in a hurry, and wished to travel part of the way to-night, and have got a little out of our way, I suppose,” said Dora, quietly.

“H’m. Well, you can’t pass this way without the

countersign, and I think the colonel had better talk with you a little before you go back. I shall be relieved in a few minutes, and then I'll take you to him."

"We'm much obleege," ventured Pic; "but 'tain't a bit wūf while to bother the kunnel 'bout us, an' we'm in most a awful hurry. Ef dis yer ain't de way, we'll jes' go back a piece, an' fin' anoder road."

"Halt, there! If you go either backward or forward a step, I'll shoot you, you black scoundrel!" exclaimed the soldier, sternly. "I think, for my part, your story is a very queer one, and I shall detain you for examination."

"Don't say any more, Pic," whispered Dora, softly. "By and by you can turn suddenly, and be off before he can shoot."

Her advice was cut short by another order from the sentinel.

"Dismount, boy, and tie your horse to this tree. Then stand out in the road in sight."

"Neber fear, missy; we'll fool 'em yet," whispered Pieter, hastily; as he slowly obeyed so far as to dismount; but the knot with which he tied Jump to the sapling indicated by the sentinel was such that a single pull at the bridle would loosen it and although he posted himself in the middle of the road, it was with every muscle ready for a spring to the horse's back, should any opportunity of escape present itself.

None, however, appeared. The sentinel never for a moment relaxed his vigilance, and the cold, gray light of the morning gleamed warningly from the barrel of his musket. He did not make any further remark, and when Pic, unable to long remain silent, attempted to enter into conversation, he was sternly ordered to "hold his tongue."

A long half hour passed, and then approaching footsteps were heard, and the challenge, "Who goes there?" was returned by the countersign, "Confederacy," as "the relief" came up, and after a hurried glance at the prisoners, made some inquiries of his comrade concerning them.

The latter in a low voice explained his suspicions and his intention of taking them immediately to "the bridge," that the question of their detention might be decided by the colonel.

"The colonel ain't there now; he's gone back to camp," said the new comer.

"Well, I suppose the captain will send them up. I shall report to him, at any rate. Come then, boy, untie your nag, and lead him along; or stop — I'll lead him, and you go in front. Right along this path. Step!"

Picter, without reply, shambled along in the direction indicated, followed by the young soldier, leading Jump, with Dora sitting erect and indignant in the saddle. The morning had now fully opened, clear and beautiful. Through the thin foliage of the wood the little girl pres-

ently caught the blue sparkle of running water, and a rippling murmur as of a stream at hand.

It was, though Dora did not know it, Green Brier River, and their guide was a vidette from a rebel company stationed at the bridge across it, to watch for the federal troops, of whose approach the rebel general had been warned some hours previously.

Emerging from the wood at some little distance from the bridge, the prisoners caught one glance of the sparkling stream, the winding mountain road beyond it, and of dark lines of gray-coated men drawn up at the end of the bridge nearest to them, in position to defend it. All this they saw in the first instant; in the next their eyes were blinded by a blaze of fire from the mouths of a hundred muskets, while the sulphurous smoke and deafening rattle of their breath stunned and suffocated them.

Captor and captured started back instinctively to the shelter of the trees, for, as if it were the echo of the first, another crash of musketry pealed from the other side of the river, another flashing cloud of fire and smoke filled the air, while over their heads, and among the trees at either hand, pattered and whistled the leaden hail born of that portentous cloud. Wild shouts, near at hand and farther off, next arose upon the air, mingled with the ring of many feet as they rushed across the bridge. All passed in a single moment. In the next the sentinel exclaimed eagerly, —

“The Yankees, by thunder!” and, dropping the bridle of the horse, he rushed forward to join the fray.

“Now’s de time, missy,” exclaimed Picter, eagerly, as he darted forward and caught the rein before Jump had time to plunge away, as he evidently wished to do.

“Now what we’s to do is to git out ob de way ob all han’s, till de fight’s ober, an’ den jine our own men.”

“Quick then, Pic. Mount before me; that other man behind us, the guard, will be up in a minute; he’ll hear the firing.”

“To be shore he will; here we be. Now den.”

Turning the horse’s head directly into the woods, Picter soon put himself and his companion out of reach or sight of the combatants; but curiosity as to the event of the fight so strongly pressed him, that he was no sooner in safety than he abandoned the reins to Dora, while he hastily climbed a tall chestnut tree, and finally got a view of the bridge.

“Hooray!” exclaimed he so soon as his eyes rested upon the scene. “Dat’s you, Yanks. Gib it um! Lor, how dey does come peltin’ down on ’em! Dat’s it; pour it in, hot and heavy, blue-coats! Now dey feels it; now dey squirms! At ’em, boys! Hit um agin; hole dah noses down to de grin’stone, an’ gib um anoder turn c’ de handle. Dat’s it! Hooray, now! Dere dey runs! Now dey scampers! Foot it, ole gray-backs! Run yer pootiest! Let out den! Prick ’em up, boys, wid de baggonets! Show um de way to make time! O, golly!

if dis yer ain't a bressed sight, den I didn' neber see one, on'y it didn' las' long enough; deys all out o' sight now, ebery moder's son ob 'em, de gray-coats heavin' away dey coats, an' guns, an' knapsacks, like as dey didn' neber expec' to want noffin' more in dis worl'. Spec a good many on 'em won't. Golly! dere'll be pick-in's fer somebody dere, I reckon."

With a sigh for the unattainable plunder, ending in a chuckle at the success of the side he had espoused in the quarrel, Pieter came slowly down out of the chestnut tree, and again mounted in front of Dora, who had sat with flushed face and gleaming eyes, drinking in the somewhat fragmentary description of the skirmish to be gathered from the negro's exclamations.

"O, Pieter," said she, breathlessly, when he was again beside her, "will there be more fighting? will there be a real battle? O, Pic, can't you take me somewhere to see it?"

"Would you like 'o see it, chile? Wouldn' ye be scar't nor noffin'?" eagerly demanded Pic, who was every bit as anxious to see the fight as herself, and who was glad to find an excuse in her own wishes for lingering with the little girl in a scene of possible danger, and certain horror, should a general battle ensue.

"Scar't! no indeed!" cried Dora. "Do make haste, and get somewhere where we can see the whole."

"Lors, honey, who'd tink of a pooty leetly gal wantin' ter see a big fight, wif lots o' men a bleedin' an' a dyin'

all 'bout her. You'd be right for a sojer's wife, missy, to help take care ob de pore wounded fellers in de hospital."

"And so I will," cried Dora, with enthusiasm. "I am not old enough to be a soldier's wife, but I will be the sister or the daughter of every soldier that I can help. There will be men wounded in this very battle — won't there, Pic?"

"Dere will dat, missy."

"Well, I will take care of them. You will see how handy I can be with sick folks. Mother always said I was a born nurse."

"Specs you's born fer eberyting dat's good an' comfor'ble, honey," said the negro, turning round to look lovingly into her glowing face.

"But now we must get where we can see something, Pic. Do you know anything about the fight, who it is, and what they are trying to do?"

"Dey's our fellers from Cheat Mountain, ob course," said Pieter, confidently. "Wedder part or de whole I couldn' say, an' I specs dey's come down dis mornin' to clean out a rebel hole dat dey calls Camp Bartow, some'eres here on dis Green Brier River. I was talkin' long wid a berry 'telligent feller, fer a nigger, t'oder day; he'd been scoutin' roun' here, an' he know'd all 'bout it. But our gen'ral couldn' make up he mind to trus' a nigger's story, so he sent de lightes' complected feller in de brigade to see if Jonas (dat's de nigger) had tole right;

but de foxy head got took, or shot — didn' neber come back, any way. Den anoder feller, a doctor dat lives roun' here, up an' said he'd go ; but he's got orful tanned dis summer ridin' a hossback, an' I don' know wedder de gen'ral took him or not. Specs he'll hab to sen' to Richmon' arter some creturs dey had dere makin' a show on 'em. Dey called 'em Albinos, an' dey was jes' as white as snow. Dem's de fellers to spy out a rebel camp."

"Well, and did this Jonas tell you where Camp Bartow is, so that you can find it?" asked Dora, eagerly.

"Yis, honey. It's on de side ob a mountain called Buffler Hill."

"Buffalo Hill? Why there aren't any buffaloes about here."

"Might 'a ben once, honey, ef dere isn' now. Any ways, dat's what dey calls it ; an' de rebels has frowed up fortifications, an' dug trenches, an' mounted big guns dere, 'nough to kill de whole Yankee nation if dey dares to 'tack 'em. Least, dat what dey say."

"And what do *you* say, Picter?"

"I says de rebels is biggest at *sayin'*, bud de Yankees is de fellers fer *doin'*," said Picter, emphatically. "So now, honey, we'll jes' skirt roun' here in de woods, an' git ober dis big hill afore us, an' den, if I rec'lect de lay ob de lan', we shall see Buffler Hill an' de whole ob de fun."

"Make haste, then ; I hear guns now !"

CHAPTER XIV.

KEEPING carefully concealed among the trees and brush covering the irregular surface of the country, Picter pushed rapidly forward in the direction taken by the rebels in their flight from the bridge. A few scattering shots occasionally broke the calm of the morning; but nothing as yet indicated a general engagement, and Pic began to have misgivings that the event was to prove him but a false prophet, and that the battle he had so pompously announced would, after all, turn out only a skirmish.

He accordingly attempted to save himself from the ignominy of confessing a mistake, by an operation known in naval language as "laying an anchor to the windward," and upon the turf as "hedging."

"De gen'ral wasn' gwine ter make much ob a fight jes' now," said he, carelessly. "All we wants is ter look roun' a leetly mite, an' see how de rebs is fixed. Fac', I don' know as dere'll be much fightin' 'bout it any way. Shouldn' wonder if we drawed off, now we'm made um run, an' come back 'noder day, to finish wid um."

"That's too bad," said Dora, quite disappointed. "I thought you said they were going to clear out Camp Bartow, Pieter. That would be a fight."

"An' so we am, chile; we'm gwine ter cl'ar it out as clean as yore lilly han', bud wedder we do it to-day or to-morrer I couldn' say. It wasn' quite decided w'en I comed away. Dis yer is w'at we calls a armed reconnoissance, dis is," replied Pic, his complacency fully restored by the sonorous military phrase he had so fortunately recollected.

"O," said Dora, a little dubiously, "is it?"

"Yes, chile. You'll know all 'bout dese yer 'fairs one dese days, ef we stops in camp. You can't 'xpect ter all ter once, dough. It took me' some time myse'f fore I made it all out."

"There! Here we are at the top of the hill," cried Dora, joyfully. "But we can't see anything for the trees. You must lead the horse down to the edge of the wood, Pieter. The hill will be cleared part way up."

"I reckon so, missy; dey mos'ly is. Golly! if dis chile had got a farm roun' here, de fus' ting he'd do 'ould be ter git a big rollin' pin an' roll it out flat. It's all ups an' downs now, like de top ob a huckleberry pié. Specs, dough I's made ter walk roun' dese oneven places, same as de kangaroos mist's tole 'bout one day. Dey's got two short leg an' two long leg, an' so's I."

"You haven't four legs, Pic," laughed Dora.

“Well, missy, two on ’em’s arms, to be sure; but den it’s pooty much’e same ting. Now, den, de trees am gittin’ thin. Don’ yer see de cl’arin’ down b’low? We’m can’t go much funder. It’s a massy dat Jump an’ I is brack, an’ you face, honey, dough it’s w’ite ’nough, is so leetly, dat ef dey sees us dey’ll tink it’s on’y a white posy growin’ up here.”

“But this white blanket, Pictor, I’ll take it off and roll it up.”

“Will you be warm ’nough, missy, widout it?”

“O, yes. I am too warm now. Then, my gray dress won’t show at all, and you can strap the blanket behind the saddle here for me to sit on.”

“Golly! What a han’ you is fer plannin’, missy! Jes’ as smart an’ quick’s a steel trap. Specs de gen’ral’ll hab you up to help ’em in de council. Take keer you don’ git sunburned, dough, else all yore smartness won’t be no ’count.”

They had by this time reached the limit of the forest covering the crest of the high hill they had just crossed. The land, for about half the height on the side they had now gained, was cleared for cultivation, and Pictor carefully concealed the horse, with Dora still upon his back, in a dense clump of young oaks and chestnuts that encroached a little upon the field below. Through their foliage, thinned by early frosts, she could obtain an unobstructed view of the scene in the valley.

For his own part, Pieter, after tying the horse securely, climbed into the top of an enormous white pine, just upon the edge of the forest, and crouched there like a remarkably large specimen of the ravens, that are poetically alleged to attend battle-fields.

“There, missy,” said he, cautiously, when finally settled to his mind, “now we’m as comf’able as de big bugs in de show boxes at de Richmon’ play-house, an’ all de fun dere is to be seed we’ll see, widout eber stirrin’ a foot; fer dat’s Buffler Hill right acrost de valley, an’ all dem shiny w’ite spots is tents, an’ dem lines ob light-colored dirt is umbankments, wid cannon atop ob ’em, an’ dem critters dat’s swarmin’ in an’ out an’ all roun’, same as de black ants does w’en a hoy sticks a ’ole in de hill, is rebels. Hullo! see dem fellers trottin’ up de hill an’ goin’ in? Dey’s de ones we jes’ druv away from de bridge, I reckon. Wonder if de leetly feller dat was so perlite to us is dere.”

“O, Pieter! Isn’t it a splendid sight!” exclaimed Dora, clasping her little hands, while her face turned pale, and her luminous eyes flashed with excitement.

It was indeed a glorious picture. At their feet lay a broad valley, its surface broken with hillocks and wooded knolls, with patches of cultivated land at intervals, relieved by broad tracts of forest.

Curving in and out, among these woods and hills, the clear waters of the Green Brier sparkled and glittered in

the morning sunshine, like the blade of King Arthur's sword Excalibur, when it flashed from the hand of the good knight Bedivere, to sink forever in the lake.

Beyond the valley rose abruptly high hills, steep acclivities, that should have been mountains, had not the gray peaks of the Alleghanies risen grandly above and beyond them, frowning down in stern sterility upon their softly-rounded summits. Far away, where a cone-like crest cut sharply upon the clear blue of heaven, a shining thread of light wound down the mountain side, as if the parched granite had cracked in a long, zigzag seam, and the eternal fires within gleamed through. It was the stream of the waterfall and the cave, transformed by the sunshine to a stream of glancing light.

Near at hand, in fact little more than half a mile distant, as the crow flies, rose the steep eminence known as Buffalo Hill. As Picter had faithfully repeated from the narration of his friend, the scout, this hill-side camp had been carefully fortified by the rebels with terraced batteries, rifle-pits, and embankments.

The defences, beginning near the foot of the hill, extended quite up to the summit, which was crowned with heavy woodland.

Through the valley, close by the base of Buffalo Hill, and up into the mountains beyond, ran a road known as the Staunton turnpike.

Following this line of road, some half mile to the

right of the position chosen by Pictor, Dora's eyes fell upon a dark, motionless mass lying near the highway, and surmounted by innumerable little glancing points. A close inspection satisfied her that this was a body of soldiers, with the sunshine flashing from their bayonets.

She pointed them out to Pictor.

"Yes, chile, I sees 'em; dere'll be a fight, a'rter all. But, Lord sabe us, what's dat?"

"Where, Pictor?"

"Down here, jes' a leetle dis side ob dem fellers. Don' you see, all dese figgers squattin' down 'hind de fence and de brush, and den ober dis side de road, 'mongst de trees on dat leetly hill? Dey's hidin', dat's cl'ar, an' dey' waitin' fer dem oder fellers."

"And they must be rebels, because they're between the rebel camp and those other soldiers."

"Yes, yes, so dey is, chile. Well, I reckon you's got de right pig by de ear now. Dey's rebels, an' dey's ambushed dere, to wait for our sojers dat's stan'in' still up dere. W'y don't dey come 'long, I wonder."

"See! There's some more."

As Dora spoke, a small body of horsemen appeared at the head of the valley, riding rapidly towards the stationary troops, their plumes waving and accoutrements flashing in the sun.

"Dat's de gen'l wid his staff an' escort ob cabalry," cried Pictor, eagerly. "Golly! if dem rebels makes out

to cotch him, de fat's all in de fire, an de skillet cracked. Wow! He'll ride right in amongst 'em."

"No; he's turning off. He's going over to the troops that have been waiting there. I guess they were waiting for him."

"Waitin' fer orders. Yis, ob course dey was. I could ha' tole you dat, chile," said Pictor, jealously.

"Yes, see," continued Dora, breathlessly. "He points forward with his sword; I can see the sun glance along the blade; he means that they are to go. There, see, they are starting! Not all, though; it's only a small part, and they are spreading all out."

"Dey calls dat deployin'," interposed Pic.

"They move very carefully, and carry their bayonets out in front, as if — There, see, see, Pictor! they have come right upon that clump of trees, where the rebels are hiding thickest. O, see the guns flash! Hear the shots! They are running back a little! Now, see, they stop behind that wall! The rebels don't follow."

"Reckon dey don't. 'Ould you follow a hornet inter his nes'? Now den, look a' dah. De gen'l an' de oder ossifers runnin' roun' like mad, an' de sojers steppin' out — dey's all gwine now — de hull bilin' on 'em. Guess um rebs'll hab to cl'ar out o' dat, 'bout de quickest. High O, Jack! Dat's de way! Hooray for de Union an' de Hoosier boys!"

The cause of this last exclamation was a grand rush

of the whole regiment, so intently watched by Pictet and Dora, in the direction of the ambushed enemy. The company deployed as skirmishers had, on discovering the enemy, — nearly a thousand strong, — given him a volley, and then, falling back, had waited for the support of their comrades. This had been given upon the instant, and the whole regiment, dashing forward with loud cheers and flaunting colors, charged so impetuously upon their opponents, that the rebels, hardly pausing to return the first volley, broke and fled, hotly pursued by the excited victors.

One large body rushed across the valley in the direction of their camp, followed by a part of the federals, from whose waving lines flashed continually the blaze of the muskets, loaded as they ran; and at every flash fell a dead or wounded foeman.

The remainder of the rebels, consisting principally of those who had been concealed among the timber to the left of the road, fled precipitately up the mountains, staunchly followed by the Union men, firing incessantly in spite of the difficulties of the ground, or, when so fortunate as to overtake the fugitives, engaging in breathless hand-to-hand conflicts, as terrible as they were brief.

In the valley calmly sat the general and his staff, pennon and plumes softly waving in the golden autumn air, their horses prancing and pawing with excitement, trappings and accoutrements flashing again to the dancing

sunbeams. It was the fair outside of the battle picture, whose grim reverse was to be found among those bloody thickets on the mountain side, and in the laurel swamp across the valley, where the right wing of the rebels was overtaken, and received a withering volley from their pursuers, who then slowly retired to their post.

The other companies were also recalled from the hills, which they had entirely cleared of the rebels, who were by this time safely sheltered in their intrenchments, except the prisoners, some few wounded, who were presently to be cared for by the victors, and the many who lay stiffening in their blood, with wide, ghastly eyes frozen in their last look of pain and horror.

A battery of flying artillery now dashed down the road, past the hill where Picter and Dora had taken post, and, pausing directly in the enemy's front, unlimbered its guns and opened fire. At the same time the regiment which had cleared the road for it, and which was now recognized by Picter as the Indiana Fourteenth, moved rapidly forward, and took post upon the hill-side in its rear. Another battery occupied a point near the ambush whence the rebels had been driven, and a single gun, commanded by the gallant Daum in person, rattled defiantly up to a position on the left of the Indiana men, and boldly opened fire.

The rebels, although they had retreated so nimbly in the field, were brave within their intrenchments, and

vigorously returned the fire of the federal artillery from their lower line of batteries, where were mounted seven guns. These, however, were badly served, and wildly aimed. Most of the first shot fell short of the mark, and many others were fired above it.

The roar of artillery now became continuous, as the batteries of the Union force loaded and fired without pause, and often six or eight of the reports were simultaneous. The rebels, on their side, kept up nearly an equal fire, and, in noise at least, their execution was equal to that of their opponents.

Across the valley rolled the heavy volumes of smoke, swept before a light breeze, and from the mountain sides echoed and reëchoed, in grand reiteration, the thunder of the cannon, while the earth trembled beneath the heavy reverberation.

Suddenly from the mountain camp rose one, two, three rockets, in quick succession, sweeping up into the clear sky, exploding, and fading away, unheard and almost unnoticed in the wild tumult of the battle.

“Now, now, gen’l, do you see dat ar’?” muttered Pieter, uneasily. “Dat means somefin’, shore. Dey doesn’t feel like lettin’ off fire-crackers fer fun, up dah, I’ll bet a cent. Like as not dere’s more on ’em comin’, an’ dem rockets means, ‘Hurry up you cakes!’ Gosh! Reckon de ole man didn’ see it, or he wouldn’ set so easy in him saddle.”

But the general did see and understand the signal, almost as clearly as Pictet himself, and in a few moments long lines of infantry were to be seen glancing in and out among the hill-side trees, as they deployed left and right, far upon either wing, to guard the Union batteries from a flank movement of the enemy, or his expected reinforcements.

CHAPTER XV.

MEANTIME most of the rebels' guns had been either dismounted or silenced ; but one piece continued to fire, and, having at last got the range, began to do some execution, taking off with one of its balls the arm of an artillery man, and with the next killing outright a gunner of the same corps.

At this sight, a young fellow attached to Daum's gun, who had never before been under fire, became panic-stricken, and turned to fly ; but the choleric captain pursued, overtook, and stopped him, and, in spite of the poor boy's piteous cries, and protestations that he should certainly be killed with the next shot, drove him relentlessly back to his gun with a shower of blows from the flat of his sword, and a storm of reproaches and opprobrium as the reward of his cowardice.

“ Golly ! ” remarked Pictet from his tree, whence he had watched this little incident with great attention. “ Dey say, ‘ Honesty de bes' policy ; ’ but, for my part, I tink courage de bes' policy fer us sojers. Might as well stan' you chance o' bein' shot as to be licked to def wid a sword, an' den be called coward all de res' you life.”

“Look, look, Pictor!” said Dora, in a low, excited voice.

“Look whar’, honey?”

“On the road coming down from the mountains, there behind the rebel camp. The others are coming. That is what the rockets meant!”

“Lor’ ’a’ massy, so dey be! *How* dey comes peltin’ down de hill! an’ see de cannon a shinin’, an’ de horses a galloppin’! Dere be four, five, rijiments, for sart’in. Hark! Hear de ole fools a hootin’ and singin’ out ’hin’ dere mud-banks! Tinks dey’s got us now, shore. Dat shows how scar’t dey was, any way. Reckon dey’d better wait now, till dey’s out o’ de woods, ’fore dey begins ter holler dat-a-way. Reckon dey’ll fin’ dey’s got more dan dere match, if dey *has* got ’forcements. So’s we got ’forcements, an’ plenty ob ’em too, if we was a min’ to fotch ’em up. ’Tain’t our way, dough, to turn up all han’s to drive a leetly yaller dog out de door-yard, even if he has got a bull-pup to help him. Holler away — won’t ye?”

Thus grumbled Epictetus, forgetting, in his alarm and anger at the sight of powerful reënforcements to the enemy, the calm dignity befitting a namesake of the old Greek philosopher and moralist.

But his sneers and boasts met with no response, for Dora, his only possible auditor, was absorbed in watching the glittering line of bayonets descending the moun-

tain road, and fling into the intrenchments of the rebel camp, where they were received with vociferous cheers of welcome, ringing loud and clear above the sterner sounds of battle.

The new pieces were quickly placed in position upon the upper line of fortifications, and opened fire amid renewed cheers upon the part of the besieged. These, however, were of short duration, for the federal batteries reopened, after their brief rest, with renewed energy, and soon proved that both their guns and their practice were better than those of their enemy.

“What for de fools want ter aim so high? Dere ain’t noffin’ to shoot up here ‘cept we,” muttered Picter, uneasily, as a round shot fell into the field a few hundred yards below his position.

The next moment a shell, rising in a bold curve from the new battery, swept across the sky with a shrill scream to be remembered but not described, and finally swooped down, like some horrible bird of prey, upon the little grove where Dora was concealed.

“O! O! De Lord in heben sabe us! O, missy! O, de Lord!” yelled Picter, clinging to his own tree, while, with blanched face and starting eyeballs, he watched the iron death that now lay directly behind Jump’s hind feet, its smoking fuse threatening instant destruction to the whole party.

Dora, without speaking, slipped from her saddle. “It’s

a shell—isn't it? Is it that fire in the string that blows it up?" asked she, hurriedly.

"Yis, yis; it'll go in a secon'! Run, missy, run fer de woods!" gasped Picter, beginning to come down the pine tree as fast as his limbs, paralyzed by fear, would permit.

Before he could reach the ground, however, Dora had seized the smouldering end of the fuse in the skirt of her woollen dress, and held it firmly compressed in her hand, as she knelt beside the shell, with pallid face and eyes dilated with excitement.

"O, de Lord! O, honcy, chile! You leetly fool! You bressed leetly angel!" stammered Picter, quite unconscious of what he said, as he staggered back against the bole of the pine tree.

"It's out," said Dora, quietly, as she unclasped her hand, and pointed to the black end of the fuse, charred down to the very surface of the shell.

"O! O! O! missy!" gasped Picter again, as he sank upon the ground, and, hiding his face in his folded arm, began to cry lustily.

Dora looked at him a moment, then looked at the shell, but said never a word. It was only by her marble face and shining eyes that one could have guessed how much was stirring within that little heart. When she did speak, it was very quietly.

"Perhaps we'd better go away from here, Pic. They

seem to be firing at the battery just below us, and all the balls go over it. There is another falling in the field just down here."

"Go 'way from dis, says you!" exclaimed Pieter, almost angry at the child's coolness. "Course we will, 'thout we's ready to be blowed inter kin'dom come 'thout stoppin' fer make our wills. Should ha' been dere now if dat 'ere fuss had been de proper len'f. Reckon de shells we's frowin' up dere can't be pinched out like um candle snuff."

While speaking, Pieter had hastily loosed Jump's bridle from the sapling where it had been tied, and replaced Dora upon his back.

He now led him up into the woods, and as quickly as possible placed the brow of the hill between himself and the enemy. So soon as they were in safety, however, the negro paused, and seemed to consider.

"Dey came from dat-a-way," muttered he, pointing in a northerly direction. "An' by keepin' roun' dat way we shall fall in wid some ob 'em gwine back. I reckon de fight's 'bout played out, an' 'tain't wuff w'ile to try fer see any more dis time."

"Let us get round where the wounded men have been carried, Uncle Pic," said Dora, decidedly. "I want to see if I can't do something for them."

"Well, honey, de amberlances'll be in de rear, an' I 'spect dat we shall get at dat by keepin' right 'long dis

way. I daresn' go down in de road fer fear of meetin' some ob de rebels skulkin' roun' de back way to dey camp. Dey'd be sure to shoot a nigger dat didn' b'long to deyse'fs, ef dey should meet him now, dey's so mad."

"Then keep along here in the woods, but do make haste," said Dora, impatiently. "O, Picter, I never shall forget, when our guns left off firing that time, just before the other rebels came up, how the horrid groans and screams of the wounded men over in their trenches seemed to fill the whole air."

"Yis, missy, I hear um," replied Pic, with an animation that was not wholly horror. "Golly! I reckon we gih some on 'em fits."

"But, Pic, do they have doctors, and nurses, and comfortable beds over there?" asked Dora, piteously.

"Reckon so, missy; bud I 'xpect mos' o' de fellers dat got hit with de sugar-plums we frowed 'em to-day, won't neber want no doctor. We doesn' fire shells wid tails as long as de pussy-cat's."

"But those that groaned so horribly were only wounded, not dead," persisted Dora.

"Good for um lay an' groan a leetly while, an' 'flect on dey sins, 'fore dey die. Like ter fill dem trenches right in wid quick-lime, an' finish 'em off," said Picter, with a curious mingling of recklessness and ferocity in his tone.

"Picter, I don't like to have you talk that way," said

Dora, seriously, as she fixed one of her steady glances on his face.

"'Xcuse me, missy," said the negro, his glowing eyes falling before hers. "I know dat ain't de way dey talks in de Bible; bud you knows, missy, we niggers doesn' hab de huckra ways 'bout some fings. Now you washes you face in de mornin', an' forgib you enemy ebery day; but my fader come from Afriky, an' use to go fight an' kill he enemy ebery chance he git, an' den eat 'em up."

"Eat them up!" echoed Dora, in horror.

"Sart'in, missy. Dat de way he eddicate; an' I don' s'pose he wash his face hardly neber, 'cause dey didn' hab no water where he lib. So you see, missy, we diff'ent."

"But, Pictet, your father died when you were a little hoy, and you have always been taught just as I have. You are a Christian, you know, Pic, and your father wasn't."

"Yis, missy; bud I's de son oh my own daddy fer all dat. De Bible says dat de wil'-cat can't change he fur, nor de nigger wash hese'f w'ite."

"Well, never mind," said Dora, after a few minutes of puzzled thought, "whether you are just like me or not; you're a dear, kind old uncle, and never was cross or ugly to me, or any one else, that I know of; so it don't make so much difference what you say."

"Dat's it, missy. It's de doin', an' not de sayin', dat's

de mos' importance, mist's use to say; an' w'en I talks de way you doesn' like, honey, you mus' 'flect dat it's on'y de ole nigger daddy dat's talkin', an' dat it'll be Uncle Pic dat'll do de doin'."

Dora laughed, and perfect harmony was once more restored between the two.

For nearly an hour Pictor pursued the course he had adopted, as likely to bring him to the rear of the federal army, keeping all the time within the shelter of the woods, and below the crest of the hills.

He now, however, judged it time to keep up a little so as to intersect the high road, along which it was probable the troops would make their line of march in returning to their encampment.

Striking a ravine between two of the hills dividing the valley from their own position, the negro cautiously followed it up, until, nearing the edge of the woodland, he hitched the bridle to a tree, and went forward to reconnoitre.

In a few moments he returned with far less precaution.

"All right, missy," said he, gleefully. "We'm hit jes' on de right spot. Here's de amberlances an' de surgeons, an' de Twenty — Ohier; dat's our own riji-mint, you 'member, all in a heap. De res' ob de army is marchin' ahead, an' we'm waitin' ter fotch up de rear, I reckon, from de looks. Come, ole hoss, step 'long -- will ye?"

In a few moments Dora found herself upon the edge of the wood, and only a few hundred feet from a line of ambulances already nearly filled with wounded men, whose groans attested the severity of their sufferings.

A surgeon and his assistant, distinguished by their green sashes, stood close at hand, their faces pale, their hands stained with blood. Their work had been severe, for wounded rebels had shared equally with federal soldiers in their care and attention.

A party of men carrying stretchers were slowly moving up the valley. Beyond them stood the Ohio regiment, to which Pieter considered himself attached, drawn up in a solid phalanx, ready to close the rear of the retreating army, when the hospital train should be prepared to precede them.

Several officers were standing around the surgeon, talking with him and each other, and in the shade of the trees sat or lay men slightly wounded, or suffering from heat and exhaustion.

Pieter, after a slight pause, walked boldly up to the group of officers, still leading Jump with Dora upon his back.

“Hullo! What have we here?” cried a young captain, who had just asked for a strip of sticking-plaster to apply to a slight bayonet scratch upon his beardless cheek.

“Here’s our prince of sable cooks and strategists,

come back with some sort of mountain elf to bear him company. Who is it, Pictor?"

"Sarvent, Cap'n Bruff," said Pictor, passing him with a military salute, and keeping on towards the surgeon.

"Well, Pictor," said that gentleman, carelessly, "where did you drop from?"

"I's been off wid a furlough, doctor," said the negro, modestly. "An' dis yer young lady is my leetly mist's, an' she'm gwine to de Norf by an' by, long wid us, an' I'd like 'o keep her wid me in camp till we goes. She jes' wild now, to come an' help you take care dese yere pore fellers. Made me fotch her straight ter you."

"Ah!" said the surgeon, benevolently, as he glanced again at Dora, and smiled. "You'd like to be an army nurse, my dear, would ye?"

"Yes, sir," said Dora, meeting his eyes in an unabashed, earnest manner, that made the kindly surgeon smile again.

"Well, you look like a brave little girl, who would do all she was able. But it's rough work this."

"May I help you now?" asked Dora, eagerly, as she slipped down from Jump's back, and went close up to her new friend.

"What is your name, child?"

"Dora, sir. Dora Darley."

"And how old are you?"

"Twelve, sir."

The surgeon would evidently have asked more questions, but the party of men detailed to bring in the wounded and dead now came up, and his attention was immediately absorbed in his fresh cares.

Before turning away, however, he said, hurriedly, "Dora, if you like to, you may fill this canteen from the brook down there, and carry water to the wounded men in those ambulances. They are always thirsty, poor fellows."

Dora eagerly hastened to do as she was bid, and with some help from Pictet, soon supplied the occupants of the ambulances with all the water they chose to drink. Murmured thanks and blessings repaid the kindness.

Dora then approached the exhausted groups beneath the trees.

"Will you have some water?" asked she, gently, of a grizzled veteran, suffering from a blow on the head, given by the breech of a dying rebel's musket.

"Ah, thin, an' it's one of the 'good people' has started up out o' these woods — isn't it?" murmured the Irishman, opening his aching eyes.

"Ye ould fool," retorted a comrade, who had just thrown himself upon the grass to rest for a few moments, "there ain't none o' them kind in 'Meriky. They all stay to home in the owld country, like sensible little men. This purty little gal is a runaway rebel, come in wid the nagur there."

Relieved by this explanation from the fear of an enchanted draught, private O'Sullivan drained the canteen offered him, and returned it with a "Blissin' on yer purty face, my darlint!"

Dora, delighted with her new office, next approached, with a shy, serious grace, the lines of soldiers, who, most of them, looked hot and tired after their exertions of the forenoon, although they stood steadily to their ranks, ready at any instant to repel the most unexpected attack on the part of the enemy, who might, very possibly, attempt to harass the rear of the army they had not dared to meet openly in the field.

CHAPTER XVI.

“MAY I give the men some water, please, sir?” asked Dora of the first officer she approached.

“Yes, my child, if you will give me some too,” said the major, — for he it was, — with a pleasant smile.

Dora filled the cup from a bucket that Pictor had found in one of the ambulances, and offered it with a quaint little courtesy.

The major drank eagerly.

“I didn’t know I was so thirsty,” said he. “What a nice little *vivandière* you make, my dear! What is your name?”

“Dora Darley, sir.”

“And where did you come from?”

“I came here with Pictor. I am going North with the Twenty — Ohio regiment, to find my aunt,” said Dora, simply.

“The dickens you are! You’re a cool little body, any way,” exclaimed the officer, looking at her with an expression of amused surprise.

“Do you hear this, colonel?” continued he, as his superior officer came up to speak with him.

“What is it, major?”

“Why, here’s a young lady, who says her name is Dora Darley, and that she came here under the escort of Picter, to travel North with the regiment.”

“Indeed!” exclaimed the colonel, smiling slightly, but fixing his eyes somewhat sharply upon the child, who blushed a little as she noticed the attentive eyes and ears, and the quizzical smiles, of the group of officers now surrounding her. But, after a slightly troubled glance around the circle of strangers, her clear eyes sought the grave and kindly face of the colonel, and rested there.

“And how came you to think of joining this regiment, little one?” asked he, at length, in a softer voice.

“Because Picter belongs to it, and so does—somebody I know,” replied Dora, hesitating a little as she remembered that her mother’s visitor had said that “Captain Karl” was only a home name.

“And who is Picter?” pursued the colonel.

“Picter! Don’t you know Picter, sir? Why, he belongs to this regiment. He’s— O, there he is!”

She pointed, as she spoke, to the negro, who, finding that his little mistress was about to have an interview with the higher powers, had modestly shrouded himself from observation behind the group of officers.

“It’s a contraband, that has been cooking for the men for the last few weeks, colonel,” explained the captain of Co. B., in an apologetic sort of manner.

“Indeed! Is their *cuisine* so elaborate in its arrangements that they have to employ a professional?” asked the colonel, a little sarcastically.

“He was going North, but Captain Karl brought him here,” interposed Dora, rather hastily, as if anxious to explain that her old friend had not attached himself to the regiment uninvited.

“And who is Captain Karl?” asked the colonel again.

“That isn’t his name; not all his name, at least. He is — O, there he is!” cried Dora, joyfully, as she caught sight of her friend advancing down the valley at the head of his company, who had been detailed to make a final search in the thickets on the hill-side for any wounded who might have been concealed there, and overlooked.

“What! Captain Windsor?” asked the colonel.

“Yes, sir. He was a prisoner, and was at our house, and Pieter showed him the way.”

“O, ho! Yes, indeed, I have heard that story from the captain himself, and I remember now about the black fellow. Windsor asked to have him attached to the regiment in some fashion, and I told him to set him to help the cook. Bless my soul! I had forgotten all about it. And so you belong to the good woman who took care of the poor boy, and set him forward on his way?”

“It was mother, sir,” said Dora, with the old straitness settling upon her lips.

“And how came mother to send you after him, child?”

"She is dead, sir," said Dora, softly.

"Tut, tut! is it so? And where are the rest of your family, my poor little maid?"

"My father and brother are in the rebel army, sir, and my aunt was not kind; so I went away from her."

"Went away — how?"

"In the night, with Pieter. Mother didn't want us to be rebels. She told me to go away to the North as soon as I could," said Dora, anxiously, for a little cloud had settled upon the colonel's brow. It cleared now, however.

"So mother didn't want you to be a rebel, eh?" asked he.

"No, sir. Nor I didn't want to myself."

"What, you are a Union girl, then?"

"Yes, sir. I'm Union all through," asseverated Dora so earnestly, that a smile went round the circle of attentive listeners.

"That's right, Dora. You said your name was Dora — didn't you?"

"Yes, sir; Dora Darley."

"Dora *Darling*, I shall feel inclined to call you," said the colonel, pleasantly. "And if you are going to join the regiment, I shall give you the rank of *vivandière*. Would you like that?"

"What is that, sir?" asked Dora, gravely.

"You will have to do just what you have been doing

now — carry water to all the wounded men after a battle, and bring relief to them, if they are unable to seek it. Then you can help in the hospital a good deal, I dare say, and there will be a good many ways of making yourself useful to the sick and wounded. I shall give you into the chaplain's care, and he will tell you what to do. Would you like it?"

"O, yes, sir! That is just what I should like better than anything," cried Dora, with shining eyes and joyful smile.

"All right, then. — Attention!" The colonel, taking Dora by the hand, led her a few paces back, so that she might be seen by the whole regiment. Every eye was fixed upon her. "Boys," said the colonel, pleasantly, "here is Dora Darling, who is for the future to act as *vivandière* of this regiment. Remember that every man of you is bound to guard and protect her as if she were his own daughter or sister. She is, in fact, the daughter of the regiment so long as she remains with it, and longer, if you choose. I place her in your care."

"Three cheers for Dora Darling, the daughter of the regiment!" suggested the major, gayly; and three hearty cheers went up from the smiling ranks.

"And three cheers for Colonel Blank, the father of the regiment!" added a veteran sergeant, stepping forward in his place.

The salute to the deservedly popular colonel was given

even more enthusiastically than that to the adopted daughter.

“And now three for the battle of Green Brier, my lads, and then we must be moving,” said the colonel, as he affably saluted the regiment in acknowledgment of the compliment.

“But, after all, the men have had no water,” murmured Dora to Picter, as, in the bustle of “falling in,” she found herself again beside him.

“No more dey hasn’, but dey’s got a wandieer, an’ dat’s mos’ de same ting,” said Picter, grimly; for the poor old fellow had found his pride in his little mistress’s sudden promotion and adoption sadly checked by the reflection that, now she had a thousand new friends, she would hardly remember the one humble old one, who had, but an hour before, felt as if she were almost his own.

With feminine intuition Dora perceived the jealous pang, with feminine tact she relieved it.

“They are very good, Pic, aren’t they, to give us both something to do while we stay with them? We shall often talk of them after we are settled at home there in the North.”

“Bress de lamb! She won’t neber forgit nobody dat she’s sot by,” replied Pic, rather irrelevantly.

“The *vivandière* is to ride in ambulance No. 3,” said an orderly, hastening up to Dora, and smiling pleasantly

as he pointed to the wagon. "It's the colonel's orders. Pictor, you'll have to foot it with the rest of us, I expect."

"I'm got my hoss in de wood dah, t'ank you, sah!" returned Pictor, with much majesty; and, as the laughing orderly fell back to his station, the negro led Dora to her appointed chariot, helped her to a seat beside the driver, and then scuttled off to the woods, where he had left the redoubtable Jump snatching a hasty lunch from the short, sweet, mountain grass.

A few minutes later, the last files of the rear guard disappeared from the beautiful valley, and the occupants of Camp Bartow were left once more in peace, with only their shattered works and dead or wounded comrades to remind them of their late unpleasant visitors.

CHAPTER XVII.

COLONEL BLANK did not forget his promise of putting Dora under the care and instruction of the chaplain of his regiment; and the morning after her arrival in camp she was summoned to the colonel's tent, to be introduced to the Rev. Mr. Brown, commonly called, among the somewhat unruly members of his flock, Fight-and-pray, from a tradition that he had been found, on the occasion of a sudden surprise by the enemy, crouching behind a stone wall within aiming distance, and loading and firing with a promptness and exactness that no amount of drill could have improved.

In person the chaplain was tall, broad-shouldered, and athletic, with a face more manly than handsome, and a manner more earnest than polished. The men almost adored him; his brother officers were divided into two classes, one of ardent friends, the other of sneering enemies; no one regarded the Rev. Mr. Brown with indifference or contempt.

“Here is our new daughter, parson,” said the colonel, as Dora, deserted at the door of the tent by the orderly who had brought her, entered alone and came slowly

forward. "This is Mr. Brown, Dora, who is going to be so kind as to look after you a little while we remain here. He is your spiritual father, child, although of the church militant, and as ready with his weapon, on occasion, as any of us poor sinners."

"Don't puzzle her, Blank," whispered the chaplain hastily to the colonel, who ranked first in the class of ardent friends above alluded to. "Don't make her afraid of us. Come here, my dear," continued he aloud, extending a cordial hand to meet Dora's somewhat backward one.

"So you have come to help me a little in the hospital?" asked he, kindly, as he seated the child on a camp stool beside him.

"Yes, sir," said Dora, rather coldly; and then her eyes, hitherto downcast, rose slowly to the level of his face, and calmly, not boldly, rested there long enough to fully scan its lines and expression.

"He isn't handsome, but he looks real good, and as if he knew more than almost any one," was the thought that shaped itself in Dora's mind as she kept her steady eyes fixed upon the somewhat rugged face, that at last blushed like a boy's beneath her scrutiny.

"*Ma foi, cette demoiselle vous fait grand'attention, mon beau garçon,*"* said the colonel, laughing.

* By my faith, this young lady is very much taken with you, my handsome fellow.

“*Chut ! C'est enfant d'après nature. N'effrayez pas.*” * retorted the chaplain, recovering his self-possession.

“And perhaps you will like to study a little with me, when we have time,” continued the chaplain, who all this time had looked at Dora as steadily as she at him. A sudden color flashed over the child's face, not, as with the sturdy chaplain, from diffidence, but from the sudden spring of hope and joy.

“O, sir,” cried she, “will you teach me?” I want so to know things.”

“Things? What things?” laughed her new friend.

“Everything,” returned Dora, with confident resolve in her voice.

“Then you feel ready to set yourself to work to learn everything, supposing I allow myself able to teach it to you?” asked Mr. Brown, still smiling.

“Yes. I think I never should be tired of learning. I don't know anything now,” said Dora, thoughtfully.

“So far advanced as that!” exclaimed the chaplain. “Well, if you are going to be so untiring, we shall have our hands full, for I will never be the first to cry, ‘Enough!’ So, now, if Colonel Blank will excuse us, we will go to the hospital for a while, and then begin our course of study.”

“But don't try to learn everything in one day, my

* Hush! She is a child of nature. Do not alarm her.

Fille du Régiment, or we may lose our little *vivandière* before we have even seen her in service. By the way, I must look up some sort of uniform for her."

Passing from the tent of the colonel, Mr. Brown, holding Dora's hand within his own, now led her toward a large pavilion a little without the camp, made by the combination of several tents into one, the curtains between being looped up for air, or lowered for warmth, as occasion might require. Along the sides of this pavilion lay two long ranges of pallets spread upon the floor, which had been roughly boarded, or, more properly speaking, logged, from the neighboring forest.

Another row of beds down the middle of the pavilion was also nearly filled with wounded or diseased sufferers; for many of the prisoners taken upon the previous evening had been wounded, and were now placed side by side, and attended with the same care as the Union soldiers.

The surgeons passed busily from bed to bed, followed by attendants with bandages, basins, clean garments, and food. The chaplain's smiling face grew earnest as the sights and sounds of suffering that filled the place smote upon eye and ear.

"Here is enough to be done, Dora," said he, cheerfully. "Let us set ourselves to work. You had better wash this poor fellow's face and hands. The nurses have no time to attend to him, with all these wounds to look

after. He is a fever patient, and has been here some days. Melvin, you can give your basin and towel to this girl—can you not? and bring another for yourself.”

The attendant immediately complied with this request, and Dora went to work so deftly and so tenderly, that the chaplain, after watching her a moment or two, said cheerily,—

“Yes, you will do nicely. After you have finished with him, you can get more water from the pail out there, and go to the next. All at this end of the tent are convalescents, whom you can attend as well as a surgeon. When you wish to know anything more, you can come to me.”

“Thank you, sir,” said Dora, softly, as she leaned tenderly over the poor fever patient, who was moaning out a petition for water.

Mr. Brown watched again while the youthful nurse raised the heavy head, and carefully placed the cup to the eager lips. Then once more saying,—

“Yes, you will do nicely, my child,” he turned away to seek the spot where his strong arm and brave words might best uphold the shrinking sufferers groaning beneath the surgeon’s sharp remedies.

Noon came, and Dora, hastening from the kitchen tent with a bowl of broth for a poor fellow who had confided to her that he was “just about starving for his dinner,” was met by the chaplain, who had been looking for her

“Come, Dora Darling,” said he, after a scrutinizing glance at her pale face and disordered dress, “I think you have done enough for once. I will not have you tire yourself out the first day. Come to my tent, and I shall send you some dinner there. I am sorry I cannot ask you to dine with me; but I do not keep a table by myself, and do not wish to take you to the mess-table. You will want to arrange your dress a little before dinner, I suppose. Where are your quarters?”

“Sir?”

“Where did you sleep last night?”

“In the cooking tent, sir. Pieter made me a bed there with some blankets.”

“You must have another place. I will see to it before night. Meantime you shall come to my tent, or rather wait here a few minutes till I have washed my own hands, and then I will send for you.”

He laughed as he went away, and Dora remained in a happy reverie upon her new life and new friends, until the chaplain’s servant came to summon her to the tent which Mr. Brown had left for her occupation while he was at dinner. The servant, having pointed out the toilet apparatus, which had been scrupulously re-arranged for her, withdrew, after promising to return with some dinner in a few minutes.

Dora, with a new care for her appearance, hastened to

remove the stains of her late occupation from hands and arms, to bathe her heated face, and scrupulously arrange her luxuriant and waving hair. Then she looked down at her torn and travel-stained dress, and hoped that the colonel would not forget his intention to provide a new one for her.

“Pictor thinks I am so wonderfully neat! I wonder if he ever looked at Mr. Brown’s hands, and nails, and teeth, and hair,” thought simple little Dora, wistfully examining herself in the bit of looking-glass taken from the chaplain’s dressing-case, and hung up for her accommodation.

She was still engaged in this amusement when the servant, whose name was Hepburn, reëntered the tent with some dinner upon a little tray. He set it upon the camp table with the remark, —

“Mr. Brown sent you this, miss, from the colonel’s table.”

“Thank you, sir,” said Dora, turning away from the glass with a very unusual color burning in her cheeks.

“I ain’t only Mr. Brown’s man, miss,” said the man, smiling a little at the title given him. “Is there anything more that I can get for you?”

“No, I thank you. Do you belong to the regiment?”

“Yes, miss.”

“Then don’t say *miss* to me. I’m the daughter of the regiment,” said Dora, with a little laugh.

“Yes, miss, I know it,” said Hepburn. “And we’re all proud and glad to have you our daughter; but Mr. Brown said I was to call you *Miss* Dora, and that the colonel wanted all the men to do the same.”

“O,” said Dora, thoughtfully, “then I suppose you must. Do you know what they call them generally?”

“What, Miss Dora?”

“Why, what the colonel said I was to be — a *vivandero*, I believe,” said Dora, coloring again with the fear of committing a blunder.

“*Vivandière*, I think they call it, miss.”

“Well, how do the soldiers speak to them generally?”

“I don’t know, miss. I never knew a regiment that had one, though I know some of them do.”

“Well, I suppose, if Mr. Brown says so, it is right; but no one ever called me *miss*, before,” said Dora, thoughtfully, as she seated herself and began to eat.

Hepburn, after waiting a moment to see if he could do anything more, withdrew to assure his mess-mates that the little *vivandière* was a darling by nature as well as by name, and that he, for one, would stick by her just the same as if she was his own sister.

After dinner, Mr. Brown, returning to the tent, found his little charge somewhat impatiently awaiting him.

“Well, Dora,” said he, gayly, “are you all ready for the Greek Grammar, or shall we begin with German?”

“I think sir, if you will let me, I had rather go back

to the hospital, and see if all the men have had their dinner. I know there were a good many who wanted some when I came away," said Dora, earnestly.

Mr. Brown looked at her attentively, and then took from his trunk a little volume of illustrated poems.

The plates were artistic in design and exquisite in execution, and Mr. Brown, carelessly opening the book, placed it in Dora's hand, saying, in an off hand manner, —

"Well, we will go in a few minutes. There are some pictures for you to look at."

"O, thank you, sir!" said the child, as she eagerly, but carefully, grasped the book.

Mr. Brown, taking another, sat down to watch her. The engraving to which he had accidentally opened represented King Arthur floating alone upon the haunted lake, whence uprose the arm "clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful," extending towards his grasp the magic sword Excalibur.

An air of romance, of chivalry, of knightly prowess clung about not only the figure of the king, but was expressed in all his surroundings, — in the prow of his boat, carved to the likeness of the dragon's head — in the bold sweep of the shore — in the transparent waters, where the dim outline of the mermaid's figure melted undistinguishably into the ripple of the wave — in the gemmed hilt of the wonderful sword, whence dripped the spar-

king drops, as it uprose to meet the extended hand of the great Pendragon.

Dora looked at it eagerly for a moment, and then raised her eyes inquiringly to the chaplain's face. He met and answered the look smilingly.

“Do you wonder what it means?”

“Yes, sir. Will you please tell me?”

“Certainly I will.” And in a few, clear, sparkling phrases the chaplain related the outline of Arthur's story, particularly the scene represented in the picture.

Dora listened, not with her ears alone, but with her eyes, her parted lips, her deepening color, her whole lithe body. She was charmed and absorbed as only a child on the verge of maturity, to whose youth has been denied all knowledge of such matters, can be, when the world of romance and story is first opened to her bewildered vision.

Suddenly, however, her attention wavered. She closed the book, and rising, stood waiting until the chaplain should have finished speaking.

“What is it?” asked Mr. Brown, breaking off abruptly in the middle of a most interesting account of the Round Table. “Are you tired of my story?”

“O, no, indeed, sir,” cried Dora, with such unaffected earnestness, that the chaplain smiled. “I could listen all night and all to-morrow to it; but, sir, you know those men haven't had their dinner.”

“Well, on the next page there is another picture that shows the last scene of Arthur’s life. Don’t you want to look at that, and hear a little about it before you go?”

Dora glanced wistfully at the book, still in her hand, then stepped resolutely forward, and laid it upon the table, saying, at the same time, —

“If you had just as lief, sir, I had rather hear about it another time.”

“But suppose, Dora, I can’t tell you about it another time?” asked the chaplain, intent upon trying the child’s resolution to the extent.

Dora looked steadily into the grave face, where was to be read no leniency of purpose.

“I think you will, sir,” said she boldly, at length.

“But if I won’t?”

“Then, sir, I think I had better go without the pictures than the men without their dinner,” said the girl, with a little sigh, as she turned to leave the tent.

“Wait a moment; I am coming too,” said Mr. Brown, briefly; and as he carefully deposited the book in its place, he smiled, and whispered to himself, “You’ll do, my little heroine.”

But the chaplain was too wise to spoil by praise the unconsciousness of merit that gave such a charm to the little act of self-sacrifice, and as he walked along with Dora towards the hospital, he only said, —

“Yes; duty comes before pleasure, or should do so, at even a greater cost than the story of King Arthur.”

“Good morning, or afternoon, if you have dined, Brown,” called a cheery voice from behind.

“Good afternoon, Windsor,” said the chaplain, turning to meet the young captain, who was hastening after him.

“You were coming to see me?”

“Not you exactly, but this young lady, who is an old friend of mine. You have not forgotten me, Miss Dora — have you?”

“No, sir; you are Captain Karl,” said Dora, gravely.

The two officers smiled, and Captain Windsor answered, —

“So I am, Dora. Captain Karl to you and my little sister and brother at home, and one or two other good friends far away just now. I knew you in a moment last night, but could not get a chance to speak to you, although I am sure you heard me cheer when the colonel proposed you as ‘Daughter of the Regiment;’ now, didn’t you?”

“They all cheered, you know, Captain Karl,” said Dora, hesitatingly, evidently afraid of hurting her new friend’s feelings by confessing that she had not distinguished his voice from the rest.

“But I louder than any one else,” persisted the captain, with a twinkle of the bright blue eyes. “Now confess that you noticed one particularly clear and sonorous note above the general shout, and wondered whose it was.”

“You was very kind to try so hard,” said Dora, with a simple pity in her voice that quite turned the intended jest against its perpetrator.

“Yes, Windsor,” said the chaplain, gravely, “it was wrong of you to make such an effort. You might have injured yourself seriously.”

Captain Karl colored a little, but answered the chaplain’s satirical smile with a gay laugh.

“*La Fille du Régiment* has an able ally in its chaplain,” said he, merrily. “And where are you going now?”

“To the hospital. We are volunteer aids on the staff of nurses,” replied Mr. Brown, in the same tone. “But if you will come to my tent after parade, I shall be happy to see you; and so will Dora, I do not doubt.”

“*Au revoir*, then. I don’t affect hospital sights and sounds when I can be of no use;” and the young man sauntered away, twisting his fair mustache, and humming a soldier’s air.

“That boy has the making of a fine man in him, if he learns that little maxim I just quoted, Dora,” said Mr. Brown, as he held aside the flap of the tent door for her to enter first.

“What maxim, sir?” asked Dora, a little puzzled.

“Now let us see who wants some dinner?” replied the chaplain, with a smile.

CHAPTER XVIII.

AFTER this, for several weeks, the little *vivandière* led a very active life. There were many wounded and sick men in the hospital, who needed almost incessant care; and the soldier nurses, overwearied and overburdened as they were, found themselves very glad to accept the services so eagerly offered by Dora.

In fact, so little care or pity had the child for herself, that Mr. Brown was frequently obliged to interfere with an authority that she never thought of resisting, and force her to take time for rest or recreation. For regular study there was, as yet, no opportunity; but the chaplain had with him a few well-selected books, and was able to borrow others, so that there was always something for Dora either to read to herself, or to hear Mr. Brown read aloud for her instruction or amusement. The story of King Arthur, and that of many a knightly hero of that and later ages, had been fully told, with such comments and explanations as gave the child subject for thoughts and dreams far beyond the scope of the mere narrative.

The chaplain, with delight not unmingled with a certain awe, beheld a mind, developing beneath his teachings,

of no ordinary vigor and grasp — a mind of such activity and constant thirst for information, that he hardly dared keep pace with its demand, while it was protected from undue severity by a vivid and graceful fancy.

But this fine intellect was not Dora's greatest charm in her teacher's eyes. Mrs. Darley, although she had been unable to give her daughter the education she had never herself received, had labored zealously and constantly to make her good; and these efforts, seconded by the child's own nature, had been so successful, that to be true, self-denying, patient, and industrious, were as inevitable with Dora as her breath. And even Mr. Brown, a man in whose strong nature the good often conquered the evil only after a fierce struggle, stood more than once rebuked before the rectitude and conscientiousness of the child, who, in her turn, looked upon the chaplain as the incarnation of human virtue and wisdom.

Captain Karl also was soon a fast friend and favorite of Dora, who always greeted his approach with one of the merry smiles that had been becoming far more frequent upon her face than they were in the old time, when care and sorrow had formed so large a portion of her life. To tell the truth, the young captain and the *vivandière* were quite as much playfellows as friends, and might have been seen, in many a clear twilight, building little dams in the brook just without the camp, or playing at ball, or even catch-who-catch-can, upon the mountain side.

With the men Dora was a universal favorite, although, partly in obedience to a hint from Mr. Brown, partly from a native sense of propriety, she mingled but little with them, and never familiarly.

It soon, however, became an established custom, that every Sunday afternoon, as many as could gather around her, either in the hospital tent or out of doors, collected to listen while the child's sweet and clear voice read out some chapters in the New Testament, and then led in a simple hymn.

After this was over, the soldiers felt privileged to approach, and hold a little talk with their "daughter," as they delighted to call her; and it was good to see how even the coarsest of them softened his voice, and chose his phrases as fitly as he might, to suit the ear and mind of the grave little girl, who spoke to each so simply and so gently, and yet impressed all with a sense of her womanly purity and dignity.

"Arrah, thin, an' it's like 'the dochter,' that the Howly Vargin was, when she was a gurrl," said Pat Maloney, on one of these occasions to his neighbor, honest Sam Ryder, who answered, with gruff emotion, —

"I don't know nothing about your holy virgin, but I had a little sister that died when I was a boy, and 'the daughter' always makes me think of her."

"Good night, thin, an' Hivin's blissin' on yer purty head, Dora Darlint," exclaimed Pat, as Dora, in passing

out, gave him her hand in turn, with a kindly, "Good night, Maloney."

Nor were these expressions the only proofs of the affection felt by the regiment for its daughter.

A small tent communicating with the hospital pavilion had been appropriated as the *vivandière's* quarters, and this was almost filled with gifts of one sort and another from Dora's six hundred or more fathers.

Not only had the tent been neatly floored by one of the carpenters, of whom there were several, but a piece of canvas had been nailed over the boards by way of carpet. The bedstead, table, and chair had been manufactured and ornamented with much labor and some taste for her express use, and the bed was warmly piled with blankets contributed by one and another honest fellow who "really did not care for it at all."

Pictures, and trinkets carved of wood or bone, hung upon the canvas walls, or lay upon the table; and Dora might have covered every one of her slender fingers with the gutta percha rings, some of them inlaid with pearl or silver, constantly bestowed upon her.

The colonel had not forgotten his promise to find a costume for his little *vivandière*, but it proved to be a matter of some difficulty to do so.

From the sutler's stores were provided a supply of blue cloth, and thread, needles, and buttons, and Dora shaped for herself a short, full skirt, belted sack, and

Turkish trousers; but both head and feet seemed likely to remain bare, as neither shoes nor cap of the proper size were to be found, or could easily be procured.

But private John Slocum had been born a Yankee, and bred a shoemaker, and after two or three days of hard work he brought forward a neat little pair of high bal-moral boots manufactured out of the cast-off pair of a cavalry captain, and presented them to Dora, with a sheepish intimation that, —

“They’ll do, maybe, to keep you from stubbing your toes off raound these ere woodsey places.”

Then private Joe Billings, who did not often like to remember that he had been a tailor before he was a soldier, went to work and made a jaunty little red cap gayly trimmed with gold braid, out of some odds and ends of finery from the officers’ quarters, and as the season advanced and the days grew chill, the same martial tailor fashioned a short cloak of dark-blue cloth trimmed with a broad red stripe, and fastened down the front with military buttons, that left nothing to be desired, either in the way of elegance or comfort.

To this costume was to be added, in time of action, a stout leathern belt circling the trim waist of the *vivandière*, and upholding a small keg of water at one side, balanced by a flask of spirits and a tin cup at the other. She was also provided with a bottle of pungent smelling salts, and another of hartshorn, to be administered to men fainting from pain and exhaustion.

She was, moreover, allowed rations from the colonel's mess table, and might eat them in her own quarters. It was a strange life for a little girl, but a very comfortable and happy one.

Only one person was dissatisfied with the new order of things ; and this was Pieter, who jealously felt that his charge had been taken out of his hands, and removed far beyond his reach. To be sure, Dora made every effort to prove that she retained the same affection and confidence she had always felt for her humble friend, and often went herself to look for him, besides urging him to come to the hospital and see her. Pieter received all advances of this sort gratefully, but incredulously.

“Don’ bodder youse’f ’bout me, missy,” he would often say. “It ain’t in nater dat you don want ole nigger chasin’ roun’ arter you, now dat you’s got ossifers, an’ men, an’ de parson hese’f, to wait ’pon ye.”

“But none of them are like you, Pieter. None of them was my mother’s old friend and servant, nor it wasn’t one of them who brought me away from the place where I was so unhappy, to this, where I am so happy.”

“Yes, missy, I s’pecs you is. Happy ’nough now widout ole Pic. Well, de ole feller’ll go back to de pots an’ pans ; ain’t fit company for missy.”

Dora felt this discontent of her retainer very acutely, and tried, whenever she could, to dispel it ; but besides

Pieter's own obstinacy, she was very often prevented from seeing him by the engrossing nature of her own business.

Most of the hospital patients were now recovering from their wounds, and were in that condition when careful nursing and cheerful occupation were of more importance than the surgeon's visits. At the head of this convalescent department stood the chaplain and Dora, not by actual appointment, but by a sort of general consent, including their own; and both found quite enough to fill hands, minds, and time, during the hours to which Mr. Brown endeavored to confine their attendance, for he wisely insisted on reserving time sufficient for rest, exercise, and food, both for himself and his pupil.

Among Dora's most requiring patients was a young Kentucky artilleryman, who had been dangerously wounded in the head by a piece of shell. For many days his life had been despaired of; and after he began to rally a little, it was necessary to perform a severe operation, that completely prostrated his strength, and left him, for more than a week, in a condition of stupor from which it was considered doubtful if he ever aroused. His name was Merlin, and both Dora and Mr. Brown had taken the greatest interest in his case, and attended him with the most unwearied care.

At last the surgeon pronounced a favorable change to have taken place, and one day, after a long examina

tion, both of the wound and the general condition of the patient, he said, —

“There, Miss Dora, I give this case into your hands now. Nothing more is required but nursing, light food, and an occasional tonic draught. Let me know if there is any change, but I think he will do.”

It was, therefore, to Merlin especially, that Dora's first visit in the morning and last at night were paid, and he began steadily to improve. As consciousness returned, however, a settled melancholy became apparent, and baffled all the little arts of the young nurse to vanquish it. In vain she read interesting stories beside his pillow, repeated bits of camp news and rumors, or tried to draw him into conversation. Merlin answered always respectfully and promptly, but never questioned, or smiled, or evinced any interest in the doings of his fellow-soldiers.

“He will never get well until he is in better spirits,” said she, sadly, to the surgeon, who rallied her upon the slow convalescence of her patient.

“I'm afraid he's a shirk, and don't want to go back to quarters and rations,” said the doctor, as he passed on, without waiting to hear Dora's eager disclaimer.

The next morning, however, as soon as she entered the hospital, the young nurse perceived that some great change had taken place in her languid patient. He had partially risen, so as to lean upon one elbow, and his flushed face and glittering eyes were turned eagerly towards the can-

was partition, that in these cold autumnal days was kept lowered between the different tents, that, as has been explained, were connected to form the hospital.

“What is the matter, Merlin? What do you hear?” asked Dora, anxiously, as she hastened to his side.

“Who’s that?” asked the gunner, hoarsely, as he turned his blood-shotten eyes for a moment towards her.

“Who? What do you mean?”

“There! That voice — whose is it?”

Dora listened in her turn, and soon distinguished a deep tone rising above the confusion of the place, in the wild accents of delirium.

“You mean that poor fellow who is out of his head — don’t you? There! the one who is singing?”

“Yes. Who is it?” fiercely demanded Merlin.

“It is a poor rebel, who was dreadfully wounded by a sabre cut across his forehead,” said Dora, soothingly. “He has been moved into the next tent this morning, because we are not going to use the third one any more at present.”

“What’s his name?” asked Merlin, in the same sharp voice.

“We don’t know. He hadn’t anything marked about him, and he hasn’t been conscious since he came in. What are you looking for? Can’t I help you?”

“I want my clothes. I want something to put on right away,” returned Merlin, impatiently, as he looked

from side to side, and pushed the bed-clothes nervously away.

“But you mustn’t; you can’t be dressed for a good many days yet. Do lie still, please do, or I shall have to call one of the nurses,” pleaded Dora, almost tearfully, for the man’s agitation filled her with dismay, contrasting, as it did, with the perfect apathy he had hitherto exhibited.

“But I must, I tell you,” persisted he. “I must know what that fellow’s name is, at least. Hadn’t he anything about him with his name on it?”

“No, nothing at all.”

“Well, wasn’t there anything—anything else,—I mean anything that some of his folks might have given him—a picture, or such?” asked Merlin, nervously, while his wasted hand still grasped the bed-coverings, as if determined to throw them aside.

Dora looked at him steadily, and turned a little pale. “If you will lie down quietly, and let me cover you up, I will tell you,” said she, decidedly.

Merlin hesitated a moment, and then sank back upon his pillow.

“The man in there had a picture in his pocket-book, a photograph of a young lady,” said Dora, slowly. “Do you want to see it?”

“Yes, of course I do; right away, as quick as you can get it!” exclaimed Merlin, imperiously.

“But I cannot get it at all, or do anything about it, unless you will promise to lie perfectly still in bed here and not even ask for your clothes again until the doctor says you may sit up,” said Dora, decidedly.

The Kentuckian muttered an oath, and tossed himself over with his back to Dora, who stood looking pityingly, and yet firmly, at him. As he did not stir, however, she turned to the inmate of the next bed, and began to make him comfortable for the day. Presently she felt her skirt plucked from behind. Turning instantly, she found Merlin again leaning upon his elbow, and regarding her with a sort of impatient submission of manner.

“Say,” began he, as soon as she turned towards him, “will you get me that picture if I won’t ask for my clothes till you’re ready to let me get up?”

“You must promise, besides, to stay quietly in your bed, and not toss about so,” stipulated Dora.

“Well, I will.”

“You promise?”

“Yes.”

“Then I will get you the picture as soon as I have done washing Lynn’s face. It won’t be long.”

“Hurry up, then, for mercy’s sake!” entreated the Kentuckian, restraining the stronger expression that had risen to his lips, out of deference to his nurse.

In a few moments, Dora, having finished bathing poor Lynn’s feverish face, tripped away to the other tent,

where she knew Mr. Brown was now to be found, and rapidly repeating to him the events of the morning, she asked for the photograph, which, with other property belonging to wounded prisoners, had been placed under the chaplain's charge.

"Here it is, since you promised it to him," said Mr. Brown, rather reluctantly. "But I am afraid it will lead to mischief."

He turned away without explanation, and Dora, slowly returning to her patient, wondered what the chaplain could have meant.

"She doesn't look as if she could do mischief," thought the child, looking at the photograph. It was the vignette of a beautiful young girl, with a somewhat timid expression in her large eyes, and an undecided mouth. The curling hair was tied back from the low brow with a ribbon, whose ends floated down upon the plump neck.

As Dora approached Merlin's couch, he eagerly extended his hand. She placed the picture in it, and waited a moment for some exclamation, or remark, to show whether the face was the one he had prepared himself to see. But the Kentuckian uttered neither comment nor ejaculation. Not even the lines of his face betrayed the emotions beneath the surface. Lying perfectly motionless upon his back, with the picture steadily held before his eyes, he looked at it intently moment after moment,

until Dora turned to attend to her other duties. When she returned, some time afterwards, he had not moved ; and when, an hour later, she again visited him, the picture had disappeared, and the patient slept, or appeared to sleep.

CHAPTER XIX.

DURING the rest of the day Dora kept a constant watch upon the Kentuckian, for, in spite of his promises, she felt an uneasy consciousness that all was not as quiet with him as he wished her to believe.

When her hour of liberty in the afternoon arrived, she sought Mr. Brown, who was reading in his tent, and told him that she feared Merlin had some plan in his mind with regard to the prisoner whose voice had moved him so strangely, and begged him to go into the hospital before night and question him. Mr. Brown promised to do so, and then, seeing that Dora looked pale and tired, he bade her put on her cloak and come to walk with him.

Dora gladly obeyed, and, as they strolled along the mountain side, Mr. Brown began to talk with her of matters that soon carried her beyond the present weariness. Speaking first of the traces of fortification that the present war will leave all over the land, to be the wonder of coming generations, he went back to the centuries of the past, and told how in Ohio and all over the West are to be found traces of battles mightier than ours, of fortifications that might include a dozen of our own, of relics left

behind in the disappearance of a mighty people, whose grand works survive, when even tradition holds no echo of the workers' name or race.

Mr. Brown, who was a determined antiquary, grew enthusiastic as he talked, and Dora listened with more avidity to this marvellous, true story than she had to the romantic legends of Arthur and his knights.

Both teacher and pupil became so engrossed as quite to forget where they were, and the danger of straying far from camp, when, as they paused a moment to look at the western sky, where the last glory of the sunset was fading away, the sharp crack of a rifle rung through the stillness, and a little puff of smoke rose lazily from a dense thicket some distance below them in the valley. The sharp whistle of the ball cut the air, at the same instant, so close to the chaplain's head, that he felt the slight current made by its motion.

"What — O, who is that?" cried Dora, as a dark figure seemed to spring out of the earth a little distance from her side, and bound forward to the thicket. "Why, it's Pictor — isn't it?" added she, as, even in the brief glance she caught of the figure, she noticed the peculiar motion of the limbs.

"Was it? But what is going on now? Stay here, Dora, or, rather, crouch behind this stump, and keep close, while I go to see —"

"But you haven't any gun, or anything!" cried Dora, holding the chaplain fast.

“I am armed; I have a pistol. Let me go, child. You must, really. Keep yourself hidden.”

As Mr. Brown spoke, he released himself from Dora's grasp, and, drawing a pistol from an inside pocket, bounded down the hill.

Without a moment's hesitation the child followed, and arrived at the thicket just as Mr. Brown stooped over a writhing mass of matter, which might, so far as eyes were to be trusted, have been two bears struggling in a death hug. Human voices, however, were to be heard in panting exclamations, oaths, and menaces, but the only articulate sounds were in Pictor's gruff tones.

“Take dat, den!” panted he, raising high above his head a knife whose blade gleamed faintly in the twilight. But the blow never fell, for, quick as thought, his unseen adversary, releasing his own right hand from the negro's grasp, dashed it so heavily into his face as to prostrate him to the ground, while at the same moment he leaped to his feet, and darted into the forest, pursued by a ball from the chaplain's pistol.

Pictor slowly rose to his feet, wiping from his eyes the blood that trickled into them from a cut upon his forehead.

“De ole cuss,” muttered he, “knockin' open a pusion's head as ef 'twor a mushmillion! Wait till I catch ye agin, mas'r, dat's all!”

“Who was it, Pictor? Did you know him?” asked Dora, breathlessly, while the chaplain inquired, —

“How came you out here, Pictor, so providentially?”

“O, de Lor’, mas’r an’ missy, how’s I gwine to tell eberyting all to once, an’ all de extry stars dat was lef’ over arter de sky was full, a dancin’ ’fore my eyes, an’ in an’ out ob my pore ole head dis bressed minute?” asked Pictor, with some asperity, as he reseated himself upon the ground.

“Poor Uncle Pic! It is too bad. Come up to the hospital as quick as you can, and I will do up your hurt. Is there any other except this on your forehead?”

“Dunno, missy. Don’ you bodder youse’f ’bout de ole nigger. He noffin’ but ole fool arter all.”

“No, you’re not, Pictor, and you don’t believe it yourself,” said Dora, laughing. “But come, let us go home.”

“Yes, it is quite time. Our friend may return at any moment, and his next aim may be truer,” said Mr. Brown, peering sharply into the forest beyond where they were standing.

“He tried to shoot you — didn’t he?” asked Dora, anxiously.

“Yes, I suppose so,” said the chaplain, coolly.

“Course he did. Didn’ want fer touch missy,” muttered Pictor, who was now following them up the hill.

“But how came you down here all ready to defend us?” asked Mr. Brown, soothingly; for he had learned to understand the poor fellow’s crabbed jealousy of all his

young mistress's new friends, and liked him the better for it.

“Wasn' tryin' to 'fend no one but lilly missy,” growled Picter. “I seed her a trabellin' off down here long wid parson, an' t'out parson had lef' he gun to home: didn' know he got lilly gun in he pocket. Den I knowed de rebs kep' a comin' roun' fer spy out what we's a doin', an' t'out like 'nough dey pick up missy an' de parson, an' carry dey off 'fore dey had time fer holler. So I took um knife, an' comed along arter 'em. Didn' come in sight, fer missy 'ouldn't want fer talk wid stupid ole nigger w'en she got buckra gen'leman to talk wid. So de mis'able ole feller he creep an' crawl long jes' like de pore dog arter he mas'r gib him lickin' an' tell he go 'long home. An w'en missy set down on de log, an' parson 'tan' an' talk 'fore her, den dis nigger lay 'till an' look at dem, till de gun go 'crack' down here in de brush, an' de ball go singin' up clost to missy head. Tou't fust 'twas her dey was shootin' at, but now I knows it wasn'.”

“How do you know, Picter?” asked Mr. Brown, stopping, and looking earnestly at him.

“Can't tell, mas'r parson. On'y I reckon 'twor you, an not missy, dey wanted,” said the negro, doggedly.

Arrived at the camp, Mr. Brown went to speak to Merlin, as Dora had requested; and she insisted upon Picter's coming with her into the outer hospital tent, now

left unoccupied by patients, while she sought from the surgeon some plaster and a bandage to dress his wound.

The negro reluctantly obeyed, and Dora, after bathing the cut, and applying the plaster, bandaged it so neatly and so tenderly, that, as the patient emphatically declared, it was "better dan a whole head."

"That's nice. Now, Pic, you had better go to bed, and try to sleep. I dare say your head aches — doesn't it?" asked the little nurse, kindly.

"Not half so bad as it had oughter," replied Pic, penitently. "'Clare to mas'r, Missy Dora, it 'nough ter make a hedgehog 'shamed ob hese'f, ter see how good you is ter dis mis'able ole cross-grain nigger. W'y doesn' you up an tell him, ' You ole fool, does you s'pec a yonng madam like me is gwine to 'sociate wid a nigger? I's got oder fish a fryin' in my pan dese times.' But, 'stead o' dat, you's jest as pleasant an' as pooty to him now, as you was dem days in de cave, an' in de ole times w'en he use to fix up swings an' seesaws in de barn, fer you an' mas'r Tom."

"And I am just as fond of you, Picter," said Dora, eagerly. "And I wouldn't say any such thing as you just told me to, for anything. Of course my time is very much taken up now, and you wouldn't want me to come and sit round in the kitchen with the men."

"Course I shouldn', honey. Wouldn' hab it no way."

"Well, then, you must come and see me, Pic; and I

wish you would make it a rule to come every afternoon at three o'clock, and stay a few minutes with me before I go to Mr. Brown."

"T'ank you, missy. S'pecs dat parson mons'ous wise gen'l'man — isn't he?" asked Pic, with a little return of jealous envy.

"O, yes. He is the wisest and the best person I ever knew or thought of. You ought to hear him talk about the Bible and heaven, and those things. Why don't you ask him to tell you about it Pic? He would in a minute."

"He wouldn't want 'pend he time on ole fool like dis yer," grumbled Pic.

"He wouldn't call you that, and you wouldn't feel so, after you had talked with him."

"Should like 'o talk wid him 'bout dem tings fus' rate, ef he'd hab de patience," said Pic, doubtfully.

"O, he is never out of patience, or out of temper. I've tried him awfully, I'm so ignorant, and he's always just so good."

"S'pecs you an' I's diff'ent sort o' scholars, missy," said Pic, with a short laugh; "but I'll try to catch de parson w'en he'm not so busy, an' ax him —"

"What will you ask him? There's no time like the present," said a sonorous voice behind them; and Mr. Brown smilingly entered the tent.

"O Lor'! Dey say dat de ole gen'l'man is alluz near

when you's a talkin' 'bout him," blurted out Pic, and then hastily added, —

"Ax you pardon, fer sure, mas'r; I didn' mean ter call you de debil."

"It isn't a wise thing to talk much about that individual, Pictor. You never can tell how near he may be to you," said the chaplain, with a sort of merry gravity. "But now you had better come with me, and ask me whatever it was you intended to. Dora, I advise you to go to your own quarters now, and get some sleep."

"I jes' want fer tell missy somefin', mas'r, and den I come right 'long," said Pictor, hesitatingly.

"Very well. I will wait a moment outside. Good night, my child."

"Good night, sir."

Pictor waited until the curtain had fallen behind the chaplain, and then, approaching close to Dora, he whispered, —

"Dat ar' feller in de brush wor Dick Wilson, if dis chile knows anyting."

"What, my cousin, Dick?"

"Yis, missy. Night, missy

Before Dora could reply, the negro was gone.

CHAPTER XX.

STARTLED by Picter's sudden and brief communication, Dora remained for some time seated where he had left her, while her mind rapidly reviewed the very little that she knew of her cousin Dick, and weighed the probabilities of his being in the position of Mr. Brown's attempted assassin, and of his possible motive in making such an attempt.

Wearied, at last, of useless conjecture, the young girl rose to visit her patients in the adjoining tents, before seeking her own little nook, which communicated with the outer hospital tent, where she now was.

In the second tent were the wounded rebel prisoners, many of whom had before this recovered sufficiently to be forwarded to Beverly jail, and from thence to Columbus, where they were retained as exchanges for the federal prisoners.

In one corner lay the stalwart fellow whose delirious cries in the morning had so agitated Merlin.

Almost a giant in stature, he was of a swarthy and forbidding countenance, and so violent at times in his language and behavior, that the surgeon and chaplain

had forbidden Dora attempting to do anything for him.

Since morning, however, a favorable change had taken place in his condition, and he was now perfectly sane and quiet, although much exhausted.

As Dora timidly paused near his bed, he faintly asked for some water. She gave it him at once, saying kindly, as she held the cup to his lips, —

“ You feel better, now — don't you ? ”

“ Yes. I reckon I've been pretty sick.”

“ Yes, very sick. You have not had your senses at all since you were wounded.”

“ What sort of a wound is it ? ”

“ A cut on your head from a sabre bayonet, the doctor said.”

“ I was in the ambush,” murmured the man, dreamily.

“ I'm glad you are better. You'd better go to sleep now,” said Dora, moving away.

“ Hold on a minute. Be you a Yankee, or do you belong round here ? ”

“ Neither. I was born in Virginia, but I belong to a federal regiment. I'm the *vivandière*,” said Dora, inwardly hoping her hearer would not suspect how proud she felt of the rank. “ What is your name ? We don't know what to call you,” continued she, timidly, as the man lay staring at her with his bold black eyes.

“ My name's Judson, — Bob Judson, — and I ain't

ashamed to tell it to any one," said the rebel, half defiantly.

"I'm glad of it. Good night," returned Dora, hastily, as she moved away.

A few moments later, she found herself beside Merlin's bed. He was lying broad awake, and apparently perfectly quiet; but his cheeks had a feverish glow upon them, and his eyes a glitter, ominous to the young nurse.

"You are not so well to-night," said she, laying her hand upon his forehead. "You are feverish. I will bathe your face, and give you some of the drops to make you sleep — shan't I?"

"No; I don't want anything at all, miss. I shall go to sleep as soon as it's quiet here," said the young man, briefly.

Dora looked at him again. She noticed that one hand was beneath his pillow, as if concealing something.

"It's the picture," thought she, "and the other man will be asking for it soon. I must get it."

But a second thought suggested that it would be cruel and unwise to deprive Merlin of what he appeared to value so much, at this particular time, when a disturbance or disappointment might break up his whole night's rest, and seriously injure his health. She therefore resolved to let the picture remain till morning, and with a kind good night, left her patient to himself.

Retiring to her own tent, Dora dropped the curtain, undressed, and after repeating her prayers as simply and innocently as she had been wont to do at her mother's knee, she composed herself to sleep.

But, although tired both in body and mind, she could not rest. No sooner was she in quiet and darkness, than fancy surrounded her with vague shapes of harm, and whispered still vaguer warnings of danger to herself or others close at hand. She thought again of Dick, and wearied herself with conjectures as to his intentions towards her and the chaplain, until at last she almost fancied he was concealed in the very camp, and might at any moment start up beside her bed, ready to murder her as she lay, or drag her back a prisoner to his mother's home.

Reasoning herself out of these idle terrors, Dora next thought of Merlin, and his animosity to the rebel named Judson; and she soon convinced herself that this, although concealed, was quite as vehement now as in the morning, when it had been so plainly shown.

As these fears and doubts pressed upon her mind, Dora became more and more uneasy, until at last she noiselessly rose from her bed, slipped on a part of her clothing, stole softly out of her little cell across the empty outer tent of the hospital, and slightly drawing away the curtain between it and the second apartment, peeped in.

All was quiet, and by the feeble light of the night

taper, Dora could see that Judson was sleeping calmly in the corner, with his left arm thrown up above his swarthy face.

The patients were all so comfortable now, that only one attendant was thought necessary for both rooms during the night, and he was at present in the inner one. The curtains were lowered between the two tents, and Dora, moving as noiselessly as a spirit, passed through the second, and peeped within the third. At the upper end sat the nurse soundly sleeping, with his head upon the table, where burned the night lamp. The sick men were all quiet, and Merlin lay apparently in a heavy sleep.

Dora stood silently beside the nurse, with intent to wake him ; but as she heard his deep breathing, and saw how soundly he slept, her purpose changed.

“ I am not sleepy,” said she to herself, “ and he is, poor fellow ! I will sit here a little while, and not wake him until I am ready to go to bed again.”

So Dora seated herself upon a box in the corner, and leaning back against a bale of blankets, began her lonely watch. For nearly an hour her senses remained as alert as at the first ; but then her eyelids began to droop ; her head rested against the comfortable cushion behind it ; the silent and dimly lighted tent, with its rows of sleeping patients, grew indistinct and confused to her sight ; and Dora slept.

Not for long, however. Of a sudden, a thrill shot through her frame, an indistinct horror seized upon her even through her slumber, and while suddenly arousing her mind to its full consciousness, laid a paralyzing band upon her bodily senses.

Through her half-opened eyelids she saw again the tent, the sleepers, the nurse, still sleeping heavily with the taper burning dimly beside him. She saw the covering of one bed thrown aside, and a man's figure cautiously arising from it. This man was Merlin; and Dora watched as in a dream, while with slow, deliberate movement he rose upright, steadied himself a moment on his feet, as if to try his strength, glanced keenly at her and at the nurse, and then drew from under his pillow a long bright knife, or dirk.

Still as in a dream, Dora remembered that this knife had formed part of the Kentuckian's accoutrements removed when he was placed in bed the morning after the battle, and she dimly wondered how he had regained possession of it.

After a cautious pause, the gaunt figure began to move silently and swiftly across the tent to where the curtain, still looped aside, showed the interior of the second tent, with the corner bed full in sight, where lay the stalwart figure of the wounded rebel as Dora had last seen him, his left arm thrown above his head, and his face upturned.

Noiselessly as a panther the ghost-like figure of the Kentuckian crept towards this corner, and, as he moved, Dora caught the glancing rays of pale light reflected from the blade in his hand.

The nurse beside her stirred in his sleep, muttered a few words, and heavily turned his head.

The gliding figure in the next room paused, looked uneasily over his shoulder, at the same time thrusting the knife into his bosom. But the break in the nurse's dream was slight, and he presently slept again, as soundly as before. Assured of this, Merlin crept noiselessly forward; and now he stood beside his rival's bed, stooping low to scan his features, while his right hand stealthily emerged from his bosom, and again the yellow light glanced shiveringly off the blade.

With a cautious movement the assassin drew down the bed covering, and lightly placed his left hand upon the breast of the sleeping man, as if to discover the exact position of the heart, while the knife slowly rose to the level of his head.

But at this awful sight — at this crisis in the history of two men, both of whose lives hung upon the event of the next moment — the frozen trance that had held Dora enchained suddenly dissolved. With a mighty effort she sprang to her feet, rushed through the two tents, and as Merlin, startled by the light sound of her approach, turned his head, she seized his uplifted arm in both her hands, and steadily confronted him.



For a moment the man glared angrily at this child who dared to throw herself between him and his purpose, and struggled impatiently with her clinging grasp. But, as his eyes met those true and steady ones, fixed in reproachful horror upon him, his own wavered and fell, the uplifted arm sank to his side, and his mouth lost the hard, fierce curve it had held.

Then Dora, feeling her power without reasoning upon it, said, in a low voice, —

“ Give me the knife, Merlin.”

After an instant's hesitation, the man obeyed. Throwing it upon the bed behind them, the girl motioned forward; and, still clinging to his arm, led her captive to the division curtain, and, pointing to his bed, whispered, —

“ Go and lie down before the nurse wakes.”

Without reply, Merlin did as he was bid; and Dora, after returning to secure the knife, roused the nurse, telling him that she had kept watch for him through the last two hours, and now was going to her own quarters.

The man, mortified at this mild reproof, was profuse in apologies, and was so evidently determined to keep himself awake during the rest of his watch, that Dora felt quite safe in leaving matters under his charge.

As she passed out of the tent, Merlin called to her, appealingly, to speak with him a moment; but Dora

only shook her head in reply. A natural horror of the contemplated deed, and of the man himself, had already replaced the calm courage that had enabled her to confront him, and it seemed to her as if she could never be willing to approach him again.

In the second tent she paused a moment to replace the covering over Judson's broad breast, wondering, as she did so, if no ugly dream, no dim horror, such as had assailed herself, had waked in this man's mind, to warn him of the horrible danger that had so closely overshadowed him.

But Dora's light touch effected what the hand of the murderer had not; and as she drew the blanket around his shoulders, the man stirred, opened his wide black eyes, and, with a pleasant smile, murmured, —

“I'm coming, Nelly,” and then dropped asleep again.

Dora, creeping away to her own little bed, wondered if Nelly was the original of the photograph so valued by both these men, and also what Nelly would have said and thought, could she have known the events of the last hour; and then, utterly exhausted by fatigue, agitation, and anxiety, she threw herself upon her bed, and slept heavily through the few remaining hours of night.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE next morning, when Dora awoke with an aching head and heavy eyes, she recalled the occurrences of the past night as a horrible dream, and smiled at the feeling of terror that had accompanied her first moment of consciousness ; but the smile vanished when, as she sprang to her feet, the long dirk dropped from her dress, and fell rattling to the floor. Sinking upon the edge of the bed, Dora fixed her eyes upon it, and gradually recalled the whole chain of events connected with it.

Her first impulse was to go at once to Mr. Brown, and tell him the story, relying upon his judgment to do whatever should be best for both men ; but when, after a hasty toilet, the young nurse looked for a moment into the hospital before going out, she found so many matters awaiting her attention, that she was unable to get away until after the hour when she knew the chaplain would be engaged in his own duties : she was, therefore, obliged to defer seeing him in private until evening ; for, although he regularly came into the hospital at a stated hour both morning and afternoon, there would then be no opportunity for conversation.

When Dora, in her rounds, found herself approaching Merlin's bed, she hesitated, and shrank back. The eyes of the sick man caught the movement, and a deep flush of mortification covered his face, while he humbly said,—

“ Good morning, Miss Dora.”

“ Good morning, Merlin. Can I do anything for you this morning?” replied Dora, coldly, and without her usual smile.

“ If it isn't too much trouble, would you bathe my head and face a little ; I feel pretty hot,” said the man, in an apologetic sort of way.

“ Yes, I will come in a moment,” returned Dora, readily, although in the same constrained manner.

From the outer room she brought some warm water, mixed with spirit, and applied herself to the task before her, gently and carefully, but in perfect silence.

Presently Merlin said, softly,—

“ I want, ever so much, to tell you something, Miss Dora. Can I?”

“ Yes, if it will be of any use to you,” said Dora, hesitatingly ; for she had just done the bathing, and was longing to get away.

“ Can any one hear, do you suppose?”

“ No ; this next bed is empty, and Robbins is fast asleep. No one can hear, if you speak low.”

“ If you will comb my hair while I talk, they won't think strange of your stopping so long with me,” suggested Merlin.

“ Well, I will comb your hair ; but I can’t stop a great while, for I haven’t been all round yet ; and when I have, I am going to read to Sherman and Phillips a little while.”

“ I’ll try not to be long ; but I do want to tell you about it, Miss Dora, for I can’t bear you should think I am such a villain as I’m afraid you do.”

He paused and looked up, but Dora averted her eyes, and made no answer to his appealing tone.

Merlin sighed heavily, and went on in a low voice :—

“ Rob Judson and me are neighbor’s sons, and was both raised on the banks of the Kentucky River, two or three hundred miles west of here. We played together when we was boys, and when we got older we went shooting and rowing in one another’s company, and was great friends, as young men’s friendships go. By and by he went off to New Orleans with a load of cotton for his father, and stopped there two or three years trading, and one thing and another. When his father died, he came home and took the place, being the only child they had.

“ By this time my sister Susan, that was a little girl when Rob went away, had got grown up into as pretty a young woman as was in them parts, though she was always kind of slender and delicate. Well, Rob and she took a great fancy to one another, and was always walking, or riding, or going out on the river, and keeping

company some way. Our folks liked it well enough, and he hadn't any one to object; so they called themselves engaged, and Sue began to get ready to be married.

“Just at this' time a sister of mother's died, and left one girl — all the child she had — to our care. She had been living in Massachusetts, and it was from there that Nelly wrote, and said that her mother was gone, and had left a letter for my mother, which she sent along with her own.

“Mother said, right off, that she must come and live with her, and be a child to her in the room of Sue when she got married. Father hadn't no objections to make, and, of course, I hadn't; so I was sent off to fetch her. I stopped a little while in Andover, when I got there, along with the folks where Nelly was, so that before we begun our travels we had got real well acquainted, and before we got to Kentucky I was regularly smashed with her, and she seemed to like me about first rate.

“After we got home I couldn't do anything but just hang round after Nelly, and was a good deal more attentive to her than Rob was to Sue all along. The old folks laughed some, and Sue and my younger brother were always poking fun at us; but we didn't care. I had got Nelly to say she'd have me when her year's mourning for her mother was out, and my father had agreed to make over a part of the farm to me, and let me carry on the rest for him; and so we was all fixed comfortable — at least

it seemed so; but we wasn't long in finding out that trouble hadn't died out.

“ In the first place, we lost mother; and that was a hard matter to pull through for all of us. Then Sue said she wouldn't be married for a year from the day she buried her mother, any how; and so it was concluded that my wedding should be put off too, and all of us be married the same day, and till then the two girls would keep house together.

“ Just after this I was called to Cincinnati on business, and stopped there some months, making arrangements for my farming operations, and seeing to affairs generally. This was only a year ago, or less, and the folks in Cincinnati was all up about the war. I went to all the meetings, and got quite wrought up about it, and was more than three quarters of a mind to enlist and fight for the good old Union that had kept me and mine in peace and plenty ever since old Peter Merlin followed on after Boone, and settled in Kentucky. But when I was all ready to put down my name, I'd think of Nelly, and if I should get killed before my three years was out, what would she do then? So, after a while, I concluded to go home, and talk the matter over with her and the folks. I hadn't said anything about it in my letters; in fact I hadn't written many letters about anything, nor Nelly hadn't written often to me. But neither of us were very good at it; so I didn't think strange of it.

“Well, I got home, quite unexpected, late in the afternoon of a first-rate October day, and ran into the house all ready to hug and kiss both the girls, and old dad, too, for that matter. But there wer’n’t no one in the lower part of the house, and so I went up stairs. The door of Sue’s chamber was locked, and, even when I told who it was, she was some time in opening it. The first look I got at her I saw she’d been crying. I gave her a good hug and kiss, and then I asked where was Nelly.

“‘Out walking with Rob,’ says Sue.

“‘And why didn’t you go too?’

“‘Cause they didn’t want me,’ says she, choking down another crying fit.

“Well, I thought these was curious kind of proceedings ; but I didn’t mean to get mad for nothing ; so I kind of pooh, poohed at Sue for being jealous, and talked about other matters, reckoning that if there was any trouble in the wind I shouldn’t be long of finding it out.

“After a while Rob and Nellie came back. They said they was mighty glad to see me home, and said I’d ought to have let them know I was coming, so’s they might have stopped to home and seen me.

“I was as pleasant and chatty as they was, and any one would have thought all was going first rate amongst us ; but I knew well enough that all Sue’s laugh and talk was made up, and that she rather, by half, have a good cry than to speak a word ; and I couldn’t but feel as if

Rob and Nelly were kind of flustered and conscious when they first saw me, and had been trying ever since to pull the wool over my eyes with their pretty speeches.

“Then, as for myself, I didn’t naturally feel very sprightly when I had all these ideas working in my head, though I wasn’t going to let any of ’em see how ’twas with me.

“After a while father come in, and set down, and I begun to talk about the war with him ; but I soon found I’d got the wrong pig by the ear. The old man was a out and out secesh ; and when I said something about enlisting on the Union side, he swore the worst kind that if I did he’d never see my face again.

“Then Rob he come over to where we was setting, and father and he begun to talk a way that riz my dander right up. I hadn’t never thought nor cared much about such things till I heard so much of them in Cincinnati, and so I didn’t really know how father was likely to go when it come to the pinch ; and as for Rob, though he used to talk rather on the Southern side, I had no idea he was going to be so bitter about it as he come out now.

“Well, we all got pretty well heat up in the argoo-ment ; but we didn’t come to no conclusion, and Rob went off home.

“I wanted to set up a while, and have a chat with Nelly ; but she slipped off along with Sue, and I went to

bed a good deal less chipper than I had felt coming home.

“After this, for a week or two I staid round, not saying a great deal to any one, but keeping up a great thinking. I watched Rob and Nelly close enough; but they didn’t see that I did, and after a while they began to show out pretty plain. Whenever they could, they’d slip and sly round, and get together for a walk or a row, or to set round in the garden and on the river bank. Then they’d try to brass it out that they’d met by accident; but any fool could see how it really was.

“Still I didn’t say anything, but lay low, and kept dark, watching for what would come next. All this time, while they were getting careless, and I was getting mad, poor little Sue was just breaking her heart in her own quiet way. She wasn’t never a rugged body, and mother had always took care of her most as if she was a baby; and after mother died, the girl seemed for a while as if she’d die too of fretting after her. But then she took to Rob kinder than ever, and seemed to feel as if he was going to be father and mother, and husband and all, to her. But now — well, when I looked at her pale face and great, shiny eyes, and heard her sigh, and saw her put her hand over her heart, as she looked after her lover and my girl walking off together, it would seem to me as if I could draw a bead on that fellow with a good will.

“ At last there came a day that settled up matters for all hands of us, except the reckoning between Judson and me ; that’s to come yet.

“ Father had got to go to Lancaster to court, and calculated to be away all night. I advised Sue to go along with him for the change, and to freshen her up a bit. Nelly thought, too, that she’d better go, and told her she’d have a chance to buy some of her wedding fixings. To that Sue didn’t say a word ; but she looked in Nelly’s face till I thought the girl’s cheeks would have blazed right out. She didn’t say no more, but went up to her own room, and I guess took her turn at crying a spell. As for Sue, she only sighed in that broken-hearted fashion, as she looked after her, and then said, —

“ ‘ I needn’t go to Lancaster to be out of the way, Harry. They don’t mind where I am.’

“ I made as if I didn’t take her meaning, and laughed at her feeling in any one’s way because she was poorly ; but I still urged her to go to Lancaster, till finally she agreed, and before noon father and she set off. After dinner, I took my gun, and said I was going out to look for partridges. Nelly didn’t say much ; but I knew, by her looks, it suited her plans to have me go ; and when she asked me, kind of careless, which way I was going, I told her right directly contrary to the way I really meant to take.

“ I walked away as brisk as could be, for I knew she’d

be a watching; but as soon as I'd got well out of sight in the woods, I took the back track, and got round close to the house again, though not the side I had started from. When I'd got a good stand, I fixed myself in a tree to watch for the game that I thought would be along.

“ Sure enough, in about half an hour, I see Rob Judson riding up to the door as bold as brass, and sending his horse round to the stable. He went into the house, and staid so long that I began to be afraid he'd do all his courting there, and I shouldn't have a chance to say the little word I wanted to in the matter.

“ But, after a spell, I see them come out, and stroll round the garden a few minutes, and then they headed for the woods, right exactly at the spot where I was waiting for 'em. They walked very slow, and as soon as they was well in the woods, they set down to have a good cosy chat. As luck would have it, they chose a tree right next to the one where I was roosting, and I could hear every word they said.

“ It wan't very nice kind of talk for me to listen to, nor it ain't the kind I'd want to tell over to you, Miss Dora; but it let me into the whole state of matters between them two, and that was what I wanted to find out. I listened till I was fairly sick at my stomach, and then I just let myself down, with my gun in my hand, and stood afore 'em.

“ Nell screeched and turned as white as a sheet, and

Rob looked as if he didn't feel overly comfortable, 'specially when he looked at my rifle, and thought of his own three miles off at home.

"I looked at 'em both a spell, and then I says, without any bluster, —

" "I hain't got any remarks to make to neither one of you. All I want to know is, how soon you can marry this girl, Rob Judson, and take her out of the house where my sister lives."

"The fellow scowled, and he twisted, and he tried to laugh; and at last he sort of mumbled out that he didn't know as he had ever said anything about marrying of her. He thought I calculated to do that.

"That sort of talk riz my temper right up. I didn't make any bluster, though. I felt too bad for that. I just put a new cap on my rifle, and struck the ramrod down on the bullet I'd put in when I started. Rob watched me as a trapped wolf watches the hunter that's loading for a shot at him; but he didn't speak, and when I'd got through, I just says quietly, —

" "Robert Judson, that girl is my cousin, and, whatever tricks she's played on me, I ain't going to see any man make a fool of her. You take this here piece of paper and pencil, and write down a promise to marry her and take her home just as soon as the matter can be fixed. Then you sign your name, and swear to keep it fair and square. Come, I'm a waiting."

“ ‘ And s’pose I won’t do it?’ says he, a trying to get up a little spunk.

“ Then just as sure as God’s in heaven I’ll put this bullet through your head before you’re a minute older,” says I, calm and still, and tapping on my rifle. Rob he looked at me a minute, and I reckon he see that I meant just what I said, for, after shifting round a little and looking all sorts of ways, he blurts out, —

“ ‘ Well, give us the paper.’

“ I tossed him a letter that I had in my pocket, and a pencil, and then I said over what he was to write down, and see him sign it. Then I made him repeat an oath that would make your hair stand on end if I was to tell it to you, that he’d keep to his agreement, and I put the paper back in my pocket.

“ ‘ Now,’ says I, ‘ go back to the house, and get your horse about the quickest ; and don’t you never show your face there hut once more, and that’ll be when you come after this girl. That needn’t be three days from now. As for you, Nell, I’ll let you stop in the house till then, for the sake of your mother, that was sister to my mother ; but don’t you speak one single word to Sue, if you know what’s good for yourself. You’re not fit company for her, and you’ve done her harm enough already. I hope you feel as if you’d made a good return for the way she and her mother have always treated you. But I ain’t going to twit, and I shan’t never speak about this again

to you nor no one else. If you two hold your own tongues, there's no need of any one but us three knowing that I had to help you to a husband with my rifle.'

"I had turned away when I got through speaking, and was walking off, when I heard a kind of a rush; and first I knew there was Nelly on the ground at my feet, a clinging round my knees and sobbing so's she couldn't hardly speak. I reckoned she felt ashamed of herself, and kind of cut by my ha'sh words; and so I says, in a softer sort of way, —

"'Get up, Nell. I won't say no more; and bimeby, like enough, I shan't feel so bad as I do now.'

"'But I don't want to marry him,' says she, most choking with her sobs. 'You're twice the man that he is, and I think more of you every way. I won't have a feller that is scared into taking me. I like you, Harry, better than I ever did, and I don't want to lose you. Can't you make it up no way?'

"I looked down at the girl a kneeling and a clinging there, with her sweet, pretty face turned up, and all her curls a tangling round her neck, and I couldn't but feel it strange, Miss Dora, that I'd got over all fancy for her, so that I'd as soon have took a snake in my arms as her. She was handsome, and I reckon she never looked handsomer than that minute; and she was awfully in airnest — that was plain enough to see; but as for making up, as she called it, I wouldn't, nor I couldn't, have done it if

she'd been the only woman left under the canopy. But I pitied her, and I couldn't feel so wrathful with her as I had done, when I see her so kind of broken. So I says, very gentle, —

“ ‘No, Nelly, you can't never be nothing to me again. I'm rough and rude, I know ; but I never could love any woman that wasn't just as particular in her ways as the first lady in the land should be. I'm awful sorry for you, and for myself, and more'n all for poor Susan, who's been the most wronged after all, and is the least able to stand it. But what's done can't be undone nohow ; and the way I've fixed it, is, I think, the best for all parties.

“ ‘Get up, Nelly, and go home now, and remember what I said about keeping out of Sue's way. The sight of you will about kill her after this day's work.’

“ ‘But ain't I never to see her, or you, or uncle any more, after I am married?’ asks Nelly.

“ ‘Not at present. By and by, perhaps, when time has sort of healed up our hearts, and you've proved by your life that you are really truly sorry for the doings of this last three months, perhaps we may all come together again in a sort of way. Blood is thicker than water, and we shan't forget that you are our cousin. But just now, you'll see the sense of keeping yourself pretty much out of sight of poor Sue, at least, and if Judson knows what's good for himself, he'll do the same.’ I turned off into the woods with that, and wandered

about till after dark. When I got home, Neily was up in her own room, and she didn't come down all the next day.

“But, Miss Dora, ain't you tired of my talk by this time?”

“No, Merlin, not in the least ; but I am neglecting other things to listen to you. I must go now for a while ; but this afternoon, when the men have all had dinner, I should like ever so much to hear the rest. Won't you try and sleep now?”

CHAPTER XXII.

A FEW hours later, Dora, having seen all her patients comfortably disposed for their afternoon's rest or recreation, seated herself by Merlin's bed, with some sewing, and told him she was all ready to hear the rest of the story he had begun in the morning.

"Well, Miss Dora, I think it's very kind of you to care about it, but it's a great relief to me to tell it," said Merlin. "And as long as you're willing I'll keep right on, and tell you the whole.

"After father and Sue got home, I told them, as careless as I could, that Nelly and I had had a falling out, and that I had advised her to marry Rob Judson if Sue would give him up; and I reckoned they had pretty much made up their minds to take my advice.

"Then there was a time. Father he stormed and swore, and laid it all off on me for quarrelling with Nelly, who was a great pet of his'n, and then he turned right round and said Sue had a better right to her own fellow than any other girl, and she shouldn't give him up without she was a mind to. Then he turned to speak to her, and there she was, fainted dead away in her

chair. We thought she was dead, and we didn't get any life into her for more than an hour. When she come to, she called me, and questioned me up so close, she got pretty near the whole story out of me; and then she kissed me, and asked me never to leave her while she lived. She said it wouldn't be for long, and it wasn't; but if it had been a lifetime I'd have stopped.

“ She took to her bed that very day, and she never got up again. Miss Dora, they tell about angels looking all white and shiny, as if they give off light of themselves. Well, that was the way that girl looked. It seemed as if her soul was shining right through her body; and I don't believe she'd need to look any different in heaven from what she did them last weeks of her life.

“ She didn't seem unhappy, nor she didn't seem to care any longer about Rob, or the things that had tried her so when she was about. She never asked for Nelly, nor spoke her name, no more than if there wasn't such a person, nor I to her.

“ A couple of days after the flare-up, Judson came and took Nell to a justice's house, about five mile from ours, and they was married. Father went with them to see that all was done regular; and somehow or other Rob and he patched up a sort of peace, and father used afterwards to go there considerable.

“ I didn't know much about his doings, however, being

mostly took up with Sue. It wasn't much that I could do for the poor girl; but she liked having me with her, and there was nothing I wouldn't have been glad to do to please her.

“She didn't suffer much, and her thoughts seemed mostly took up with the happiness she was going to, and the hopes of being with mother again. She never said nothing like complaining but once, and then it was, —

“ ‘They've killed my body, Harry, but that will only give me back to dear mother, and we shall live forever with Christ and each other.’

“At last she died.”

Merlin paused, and hid his face a moment. Dora softly placed her hand on his, but said nothing, and after a few moments the Kentuckian resumed his story.

“When we'd buried Sue, I began to think about myself again. As for settling down to the care of a farm, with only father for a family, and Judson and his wife living not a mile away, I couldn't do it nohow; and after thinking the matter over every way that I could fix it, I told the old gentleman that I was going into the army. He was just as bitter about it as he was before, and finally told me to give in to secession, or leave his house for good and all.

“I took a night to think of it, and in the morning I told him I was ready to go, and asked him to shake hands, and say good by. The poor old man swore, and

then he cried, and said how his wife and his daughter was dead, and now his only son was deserting him.

“I told him that was to be as he said; that if he cared for my company, I'd stay as long as he wanted me, if he wouldn't say anything about secession, for that I should never join that party as long as I had the use of my senses.

“That made him mad again; and he told me to be-gone, and said he knew where to find a son and a daughter, too, that would be better to him than his own flesh and blood.

“I knew who he meant, but I didn't care for myself, though I was kind of cut that he should talk about Nelly taking the place of Sue to him; so I didn't stop for any more talk, but went off that very morning.

“I knew there was a company mustering in Princeton, pretty near twenty miles from where I lived, and I went right away there to enlist.

“After a few weeks we were ready to join the regi-ment, and I went over to take a last look at the old place, and see if father and I couldn't part on better terms.

“I hadn't more than got into the village near where our place was, when I met the old doctor that had always been to our house, and he, looking at me mighty sharp, asked where I come from, and if I'd heard the news. I told him where I'd been, and what I'd been about, and asked him what news he meant. Before he answered,

he made me get into his chaise, and drove off right out of town. When we was well on the road, he told me that only the night before a party of guerrillas had made a sudden sweep on our place, and driven off the hogs and cattle, seized the horses, and whatever provisions they could find, and was off to the mountains before any force could be got to resist them. But the heavy part of the news was, that my poor old father had most likely been shot, and his body burned in the house. All that could be known was from the darkeys, and they was so scared they didn't know what they saw and what they didn't.

“The most likely story, however, was, that father locked the doors and fired out of his window at the fellows when he heard them breaking into the barn, and they fired back at him. Any way nothing more was seen of him; and when the guerrillas had got their plunder together, some of them set fire to the house out of clear deviltry, and rode away by the light of it; and before anything could be done to save it, the whole place was no more than a heap of ashes, and most likely my father's ashes mixed up with that of his home.”

“How dreadful!” exclaimed Dora.

“Yes, it was that,” said the Kentuckian, emphatically. “But there's more a coming that's about as bad, as far as deviltry goes. It was out of revenge, I suppose, for my threatening to shoot him unless he married Nelly, that Rob Judson undertook to say that it was me who

led them guerrillas, and shot my own father ; and I think it was about as mean a lie as Satan ever put into the mouth of one of his children."

" Did he say so ? " asked Dora, in horror.

" Yes, he did, and swore that he recognized me, when he met the troop riding away. He told all round that I hadn't joined any regular troops, but was one of these that fought either side or any side, when there was plunder or mischief to be got, and that no doubt I had led these men to my father's house partly to steal, and partly because I was mad at being turned out of doors. Any way, about half the village believed him ; and my life wouldn't have been safe if I'd been seen in town while the excitement lasted. The doctor said, too, that he didn't treat Nelly kind, nor as he'd ought to, and that she was dreadful changed from what I'd known her."

Merlin paused, and a black scowl settled on his face. Dora looked at him timidly, and sought for the right thing to say ; but she could not, in her heart, wonder at the resentment that his next words betrayed.

" There's my sister's broken heart, and my father's life, and poor Nell's peace and comfort, and all the best of my own hopes and happiness that fellow has stole away from me. His miserable life wouldn't begin to pay the debt ; but it's all I could get, and when I left town that morning, afraid to show my face in the village where I had grown up, and all for no fault of my own,

I swore that if ever I had the chance I'd take that life as I would that of a wild beast.

“ I served out my time with the Kentucky regiment, and then I entered this Ohio one, and I've fought through pretty nigh all the battles that's been fought in this part of the country ; but though, ever since I heard that Judson had enlisted, I've been on the lookout for him, I never come acrost him, till, yesterday morning, I heard his voice in the next room there, and knew it was him. Then you got me the picture, and I knew Nelly as soon as I see her, and my mind was made up in a minute. But I saw you was on the lookout for me, and I kept quiet till you should be abed and asleep.”

“ How did you get that knife ? ” interposed Dora.

“ I asked the nurse for it to look at to see if it was rusted ; then I put it out of sight, and he forgot it.”

“ Merlin, are you sorry I stopped you ? ”

The young man hesitated.

“ No, Miss Dora, I don't know as I am. Now that I've told you all about it, I don't feel near so bitter as when I had it all shut up in my own heart. It had got to have some sort of let out, and if I had told you in the first place, I don't believe I should have made up my mind to do as I did last night. I dor't feel like it now, any way.”

“ I'm so glad of that ! and I'm glad you told me all about it, for I don't feel now as I did about you,” said

Dora, simply. "But I want to tell Mr. Brown, and ask him to talk with you, and, perhaps, with Judson. I know you hadn't ought to feel the way you do to him; but I don't know how to tell you so as to make you see it, and Mr. Brown can. Will you let him talk with you?"

"Yes, if you say so," said Merlin, rather reluctantly. "But I wasn't never much of a hand for parsons. I'd rather hear you talk."

"But I can't talk as he can, and he isn't a bit like a parson. I am going now to read to him, and I shall tell him all about you. Perhaps he'll come in to-night."

"Thank you, Miss Dora. You know better than me about it," said Merlin, wearily.

The little nurse's quick eye caught the symptom.

"You have talked too much," said she; "you must go right to sleep now, and get a good nap before supper. Mind me, now. Good by."

"Good by, miss. I wish your name was Sue."

CHAPTER XXIII.

A FEW days after these events, Dora stood, one pleasant afternoon, in the door of the hospital tent, looking wistfully out over the golden-brown hills and brilliant forest. She was tired, and not quite well, and was just wondering whether Mr. Brown would ask her to take a walk with him, and whether, if he did not, she might go with Pictet, when a gay voice called her by name, and Captain Karl rode up on a fine spirited horse.

“*Mademoiselle la Vivandière* looks moped this afternoon,” said he. “Don’t she want a little excursion into the country?”

“Yes, indeed,” cried Dora, eagerly; “but how do you mean, Captain Karl?”

“Why, I am going with a part of my company to escort a foraging party, who are proposing to help a secesh farmer, about five miles from here, get in his crop of corn. If you’ll come along, you shall have a seat in one of the wagons, or a horse, if you like to ride.”

“O, how splendid! I’ll ride on horseback, if you’d just as lief.”

“Just exactly, and rather, because you can ride with me. Aren't you afraid of a horse?”

“I reckon I'm not. I've always ridden, ever since I was a little girl.”

“And can you 'reckon' how long that is?” asked Captain Windsor, with a quizzical smile.

Dora colored hotly, for she was becoming keenly sensitive to her little inaccuracies of language and deportment, and had, indeed, corrected most of them under the gentle hints of her kind friend the chaplain. Captain Karl's ridicule, however, was quite a different matter; and she felt more disposed to resent than profit by it.

“I think I had better not go to ride until I have asked Mr. Brown,” said she, carefully. “I will go and see him now.”

Captain Karl sprang off his horse, and walked along beside her.

“Don't be dignified, Dora Darling,” said he, with a merry smile. “Remember that I'm the very earliest friend you made in the regiment, and the only one who ever came to call on you at your own home. You're not going to be cross with me for laughing at you a little -- are you?”

“No, Captain Karl,” said Dora, stopping short, and putting out her hand to be shaken; “you were quite right, and I was very silly to mind, only I hate to be wrong about anything.”

“Well, it’s not often that you are. Come, what’s the use of hunting up the chaplain? I know just as well as he about the safety, or the propriety, or whatever it is, that you’re doubting about. You’re not afraid to go without leave, I suppose — are you?”

“No,” replied Dora, promptly. “Of course I don’t have to ask leave, only I like to tell Mr. Brown what I am going to do.”

“O, well, you can tell me this time. He isn’t in, I know; I saw him walking off with the colonel about half an hour ago.”

“Are you sure?”

“Yes. Here’s Hepburn, however. Hepburn, is Mr. Brown in?”

“No, sir, I believe not,” said the man, saluting respectfully.

“Where is he gone, Hepburn? do you know?” asked Dora, eagerly.

“No, Miss Dora, not exactly; but I think he and the colonel went to look at the north works. I heard them speak of it.”

“Well, we can’t go out there,” exclaimed Captain Windsor, impatiently. “I ought to be off in ten minutes, at the outside. Come, Dora, don’t be foolish about it. I wouldn’t ask you if it wasn’t right.”

“Well, I will go,” said Dora, still rather doubtfully.

“That’s right,” cried Windsor, regaining his pleasant

smile. "Hepburn, run to the stables, and get that little white nag I was trying this morning when you were down there. I said then it was a regular lady's horse, although I'm afraid, Dora, you won't be able to ride lady fashion for want of a side-saddle; but *vivandières* never ride on side-saddles."

"I never had a side-saddle; so I can do better without than with it," said Dora, skipping along gleefully; for the idea of a fresh, free gallop in the bracing autumnal air set all her blood tingling, and revived an instinct of her nature stigmatized by her aunt Wilson as "tomboy," and by her mother as "wild."

"Come, now, that looks like having a good time, Dora Darling," laughed Captain Karl. "Here we are," continued he, as Hepburn brought up the horse. "Isn't it a jolly little nag? I'll speak to the colonel, and have him kept for your own use. Give me your foot; now, then, up you go! Here's the rein. You sit like an angel. Now we must trot, for the train has started this half an hour, and we must get to the head of it before the fighting begins."

"Do you expect a fight?" asked Dora, a little anxiously.

"Why, I don't know," said her companion, looking at her with a mocking smile. "Are you frightened?"

"O, no, not at all," replied she, seriously. "I was only thinking what a pity I didn't put on my belt with the flasks and things."

“O, that was it! You are all ready for action, then?”

“Yes, indeed; why, that is what we expect when we enter the army — isn’t it?” said Dora so seriously that Captain Karl burst out laughing.

“O, you funny little thing!” cried he, “you make me laugh so I shall certainly die some day if I see much of you.”

“And shan’t you if you don’t?” asked the *vivandière*, pouting a little.

“Not in the same way, mademoiselle. If I lose you I shall die of crying instead of laughing — dissolve, instead of exhaling; that will be the difference. But, hillo! see here! we are going to meet both our masters at once; and while I shall catch it for not having started sooner, you will fare just as badly for having started at all.”

“Mr. Brown is not my master; and I am not at all afraid of ‘catching it,’ as you call it, from him or any one else,” said Dora, proudly.

“Nonsense, Do! You know that you are as much afraid of him as possible, and that if he looks black at your going, you will turn right about, and trot meekly back to quarters. And I have got into my scrape entirely from anxiety to take you with me.”

“I shan’t turn back and leave you,” said Dora, decidedly.

“Not if the parson says you must?” asked Windsor, mischievously.

“There’s no *must* about it. He has no right to say *must*,” replied Dora, pettishly.

There was no time for her companion to reply, as the two parties had now approached near enough to speak.

Colonel Blank, frowning a little as his eyes fell upon his recreant officer, pulled out his watch, and said, after a glance at it, —

“I believe you were to start at three, Captain Windsor. It is now half past.”

“Yes, sir,” said Captain Karl, respectfully saluting; “I have been detained, but shall soon overtake my command, who set forward at the appointed hour under charge of Lieutenant Fosdick.”

“I believe there were no orders for the *vivandière* to accompany the expedition,” continued Colonel Blank, glancing at Dora rather disapprovingly.

“No, sir; but I supposed there would be no objection,” said the captain, with an assured air.

Whatever the colonel replied, as he passed on, was lost to Dora, for Mr. Brown at this moment laid his hand upon her horse’s neck, and asked pleasantly, but yet in a tone that the girl fancied somewhat arbitrary, —

“Why, where are you going now, my child?”

“I am going with Captain Karl, sir, to take a ride.”

“But where?”

“We are going to protect the foragers, I believe, sir.”

“And who is going to protect you, my child, if you

meet the enemy? I think it is hardly a safe expedition for you, Dora. Suppose you make an excuse to Captain Windsor, and come back with me to camp. I will get a horse, and ride with you, if you wish."

"Thank you, sir; but I think I will go with Captain Karl," said Dora, resolutely, as she caught the eye of her companion, who was looking pleadingly at her from behind the chaplain.

"But, Dora," continued Mr. Brown, speaking a little lower, "it seems to me hardly proper for you to go off in this manner, with no protector but so young a man, who will, besides, be too busy to look after you, in case of an attack. And I do not fancy your style of horsemanship either."

Dora's cheeks flamed, and the tears rushed to her eyes. She longed to submit to the judgment of her friend, and yet she could not bear the appearance of submission, under the mocking eyes of Captain Karl. The chaplain anxiously watched her face, and saw there the struggle between pride and duty. He feared that the former was about to conquer, and her first embarrassed words confirmed the fear.

"I always rode so at home, sir; and I think Captain Karl can take care of me."

"Come, Dora, I must be off," interposed the captain, hurriedly, as Colonel Blank paused and looked around. "Never fear, Mr. Brown, for your pupil. I shall take

the best of care of her ; and in fact you know I am one of her adoptive fathers."

The chaplain said no more, but Dora caught the disapproving expression of his face as he turned away ; and had it not been for very shame, she would have turned her horse's head, and hastened after him to make her submission.

Her companion seemed to have received a much less serious impression from the interview, and as they pushed their horses into a rapid trot, he said, gayly, —

"Well, Dora Darling, we rubbed through that scrape better than I expected. The old man will have had his dinner before we get back, and I shall be received with open arms ; that is, if I am successful, as I intend to be."

"What old man?" asked Dora, shortly.

"Why, the colonel, of course, little goosie. I don't call the parson 'old man.'"

"Nor the colonel isn't old, either," persisted Dora.

"What of that? You are very critical to-day, mademoiselle. We always call the colonel 'old man,' just as we call our papas 'the governor' at home."

"I never called my father 'governor.'"

"I dare say not. Girls don't, I suppose, because to be a young woman's father, is not to *govern-her*. Boys are more tractable, you know."

"I shouldn't think they'd like to call any one 'governor,' if 'hey are," said Dora, positively.

“Why not, you delicious little innocent?”

“Because I should hate any one that didn't leave me any choice about minding him; and if he had a right to make me mind, I should want to keep it out of sight.”

“You dreadful rebel!” cried Captain Karl, in affected horror. “Do you hate the chaplain, then?”

“No, because he has no power over me. If he had been able to say I must and should go back with him to-day, and I had gone, I am afraid I should have hated him.”

“Then you came with me just to show that you were your own mistress?”

“I don't know. Was it?” asked Dora, with a look of mortification.

“To be sure it was. Not very flattering to either of us — is it?”

“But that wasn't all. I wanted first to go, because I thought it would be pleasant; and then —”

“Well, then, after you met Brown, what made you keep on?” persisted the captain, maliciously.

“Well,” began Dora, doubtfully, “I think it was partly because you said I wouldn't.”

“That's a great deal better than the other reason, to be sure! Why don't you say you came because you had a mind to, and was afraid of being laughed at if you didn't?”

Dora made no reply; but, as she rode along, she made

a firm resolution to confess to Mr. Brown, on her return, the weakness and folly of her course, as she now viewed it, and in future to be careful, in escaping from the wise control of one friend, not to become the slave of another's ridicule.

From this reverie she was suddenly aroused by the voice of her companion, saying, rather anxiously, —

“What under the canopy has become of those fellows? This is the road the scout described as the nearest, and the one I told Fosdick to take. But we ought to have overtaken them by this time.”

“The road doesn't look as if they had just passed, either,” said Dora.

“Don't it? That's a regular mountaineer's thought, little Do. We must have missed some turn or fork, and must face about and look for the right road.”

“Perhaps this one may lead where we want to go, and we can meet the company on the spot.”

“Let me see. About ten miles from camp due north was the direction, and we have certainly ridden eight. I think I should know the place from the description that fellow gave of it. A long red farm-house between two hills, with a range of barns across the valley. The secesh that owns it had contracted to supply a rebel cavalry corps somewhere towards Monterey, and has just stuffed his barns. Won't it be jolly to empty them for him?”

“Well, do you think we shall reach the place this way?”

asked Dora, finding that her companion continued his course.

“Yes ; I don’t see how we can help it. We are travelling due north, and when our hour is up, I shall expect to see the farm-house looming up right across the road.”

“Here’s a long hill before us. Perhaps we shall see it from the top.”

“I shouldn’t wonder if we did. Come, hurry up your nag, and see who will be there first.”

Dora lightly struck her horse with the switch cut for her by Captain Karl, and scampered along beside the tall charger ridden by that officer, very much as the Black Prince may have attempted to keep pace on his scrubby little pony with his captive, King John of France, mounted upon his noble war horse.

Unequal, however, as the race might seem, it terminated in the arrival of the contestants at their goal in the same moment, and Dora was in the midst of some triumphant remarks upon the subject, when she was doubly interrupted ; first, by the captain’s exclamation of, “There’s the farm, and there are our fellows,” and secondly, by a pistol shot from the thicket close beside the road, that sent a ball humming close above Windsor’s head.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE hill, so merrily surmounted by Dora and her friend Captain Karl, proved to be one of those in whose valley lay the long red farm-house, with its range of barns, where the foraging party expected to meet with their booty.

The immediate vicinity of the house was still as peaceful and solitary as if no army had ever invaded its neighborhood ; but winding out from a gorge at the left of the hill where they stood, the observers had at once remarked a line of armed men and mule wagons, recognized by both as the train Captain Windsor was supposed to be conducting.

The pleasure and relief from anxiety that this sight should naturally have given to that negligent officer, was, however, somewhat marred, as we have already mentioned, by the unexpected salute given him from the thicket.

“ Pelt down the hill, Dora, as fast as you can ! I shall follow,” cried he. “ No use in stopping to look for guerrillas.”

He struck Dora's horse, as he spoke, with his sheathed

sword; and as the beast struck into a canter, he put spurs to his own horse, and followed, pistol in hand.

Not half way down the hill, however, a volley of bullets overtook them, and Dora's spirited little nag, with a rear and a plunge, fell dead beneath her.

Extricating herself as quickly as possible from the stirrups, the undaunted girl sprang to her feet, exclaiming, —

“Never mind! I'm not hurt! Take me up, Captain Karl, behind you.”

Captain Windsor, reining up his horse with some difficulty, stooped to give his hand to the *vivandière*, but reeled so much in the action that it was with difficulty he retained his own seat. Looking up in his face, Dora uttered a sharp exclamation of horror.

A bullet intended for the brain of the young officer had glanced along his forehead, leaving a ghastly furrow, whence trickling drops of blood rained down across his pallid face.

“Nonsense! It's no more than a scratch,” exclaimed he, hearing, rather than seeing, Dora's consternation; “only it makes me a little sickish to stoop. Grasp my leg, and climb up behind me as fast as you can. I'm afraid I can't help you.”

Dora tried to obey him, but the spirited horse, already excited by the sound and smell of gunpowder, reared and curvetted too much to enable her to do so.

“Never mind!” cried she, at last. “Go by yourself, Captain Karl. They won’t hurt me if I’m alone, and you can send up men to rescue me. Go! O, do go quick! They will kill you if you stay.”

Captain Karl replied by springing, or rather sliding, from his horse.

“Get up, now,” said he, dashing the blood from his eyes, and kneeling on one knee, that Dora might make a step of the other, while at the same time he kept a heavy hand upon the horse’s bit.

“Did you think, Do, I was mean enough to get you into this scrape, and then shirk off and leave you in it? Come, hurry yourself, child. Those fellows will be down upon us in a second.”

“But you?” asked Dora, with her foot upon the captain’s knee, her hand upon his shoulder.

“O, I shall get up in front of you,” said the young man, hurriedly; but, as the words left his mouth, a fresh discharge of bullets flew from the copse, and Captain Karl’s left arm fell shattered to his side, while another ball cut through his hat and entered the horse’s neck.

The animal, released from his master’s hold, and frantic with rage and pain, uttered a wild scream, and plunged madly down the hill.

At the same moment two men broke from the thicket, and ran towards them.

“Stand off!” cried Captain Karl, raising the pistol

he had fortunately retained in his right hand. "I have six deaths here, and you'll be sure of two of them if you come one step nearer. Crouch down close behind me, Dora," added he, softly, as the men paused in evident surprise.

"Thought the —— Yankee was done for. I put a bullet through his head, any way," cried one of them.

"There, there they are!" whispered Dora, excitedly. "Our own men, Captain Karl; they're charging up hill at the double quick."

"They'd need to 'if they mean to save their valuable captain," said Windsor, coolly. "Our friends are loading again. I say," continued he, raising his voice and his pistol at the same time, "stop that, or I fire. No loading. Throw down your arms, and come forward; you are my prisoners. Quick, or you're dead men."

The rebels, completely stupefied at the audacity of the demand, halted, looked at one another, and burst into a laugh. Then, after consulting in a whisper for a moment, they darted into the thicket in different directions, and so suddenly, that, although Windsor fired at the same instant, he was unable to arrest either.

"They've hidden to re-load," muttered he, faintly. "They'll be back in a minute. God send our fellows up in time. What are you doing, Dora? Down, this minute."

The *vivandière*, rising calmly to her feet, stood between her friend and his enemies.

“They won’t hurt me,” said she, quietly. “I know one of them. They won’t fire at you for fear of shooting me.”

“Dora, I won’t have it! Fall behind, this moment, or I swear I’ll follow those fellows and meet death half way. Do you imagine I’ll screen myself behind a little girl? Fall behind, this instant, I say.”

Dora turned and looked at him in some little doubt as to the propriety of opposing her own judgment to such vehement commands; but the rebels, catching sight of the head of the advancing column, who were struggling up the wooded hill-side without having discovered the road, now rushed from their concealment, firing as they advanced.

Captain Windsor returned the fire; but pain and loss of blood had wasted his strength, and his shots flew wide.

“We want the girl. Give up the girl, and we’ll quit. We don’t care for finishing you off,” cried one of the rebels, rushing forward and seizing Dora’s dress as he spoke.

Without reply, Captain Windsor fired his remaining barrel full into the face of the ruffian, who staggered back and fell lifeless. Then, drawing his sword, and sharply ordering Dora to stand behind him, the brave young soldier, wounded, bleeding, exhausted, stood at bay with so lion-like a port, that the remaining rebel

wavered, glanced at the approaching soldiery, who, afraid to fire upon the group, were now rushing forward for a bayonet charge, and then, with a sullen curse, sprang backward into the bushes.

"Thank God!" muttered Captain Karl, as he sank to the ground, while his men, with angry menaces, darted forward in pursuit.

Dora kneeled beside the wounded man, almost as pale as himself.

"It's a pity you didn't bring the canteen, after all," whispered he, with a faint smile; "though, if I'd any idea of such a shindy as this, I shouldn't have brought you. What will the parson say now?"

"O, never mind me; only I'm so sorry to have nothing to give you!"

"The worst of it is, one of those last bullets went through my leg," muttered Captain Karl, writhing and grimacing with pain. "Only a flesh wound, I hope; but I don't think I could stand on it, or mount a horse."

"You'll have to be carried in one of the forage wagons," said Dora, quietly; "and I shall go with you, and take care of you. Here comes Lieutenant Fosdick. You can tell him all about it."

"Well, Fosdick, you didn't catch him?"

"No, sir," said the lieutenant, saluting. "But you seem to have settled one of them pretty effectually."

"Yes, poor fellow! He wouldn't hear to reason, and

keep out of range of my pistol, and so naturally came to grief. Let some of them carry him down to the farmhouse there. Like enough they are his friends, or will know who they are. And let the teams begin to load at once. I'll lie here with little Dora, to watch lest the robin redbreasts come and prematurely cover me up."

"You had better let the men make a litter and carry you down to the valley, sir," suggested the lieutenant. "You will be out of danger of any return of the guerrillas then, and I suppose, of course, we are to return that way."

"Very well. Do as you choose," was the feeble reply. "Dora, child, I suspect you had better tie your handkerchief round my arm, above this bullet hole, unless you wish to carry nothing but a squeezed lemon-peel back to camp, in place of your friend. At this rate my supply of blood can't last long."

Dora quietly and quickly did as she was bid, nor even uttered an exclamation of horror as she deftly cut away the blood-soaked sleeves from the wounded arm, and laid bare the ghastly wound. Before she had finished, Captain Karl had fainted.

"How glad I am the hartshorn is in my pocket!" said Dora, firmly, as she noticed this. "Mr. Fosdick, will you please send a man for some water from the farmhouse, as fast as possible, and help me lay the captain down flat? You may fan him, please, with your hat."

The lieutenant, who was rather a stupid and undecided young fellow, stared a little at the peremptory tone adopted by the little *vivandière*, but hastened to obey her orders, or rather comply with her requests, as speedily as possible. The result of their efforts was so fortunate, that by the time the litter was ready, Captain Karl was so far recovered as to sneer very vivaciously at himself for needing such a conveyance, and especially for his effeminacy in swooning.

“I never shall dare ride out again without you to protect me, Dora Darling,” said he. “But I’m in hopes that in time you’ll make a man of me, by your own example.”

“Now lie down, please, Captain Karl,” returned the little nurse, busily, “for we are just going to set out with you for the wagons. And I wouldn’t talk any more till we get there, because it tires you.”

“Not to mention my hearers,” suggested the captain, as he sank back upon the pillow of leaves, hastily arranged by Dora, at one end of the rude litter.

The forage wagons were already loaded when the little procession from the hill-top reached the valley, and the whole party set forth immediately on their return to camp, where they arrived late, weary, and saddened by the misfortune of their beloved young commander.

CHAPTER XXV.

NOTWITHSTANDING her sympathy in his sufferings, Dora could not but find it pleasant to have Captain Karl an inmate of the hospital, where his gay good humor and merry mode of viewing both his own and others' misfortunes quite changed the character of the place. His wounds were by no means dangerous, and seemed likely to heal with little trouble or delay; so that, after a week had passed, he declared himself, in confidence, to the chaplain, "as well as ever, and only shirking so as to stay in hospital and help Dora on."

To him, as well as to Mr. Brown, the little nurse had repeated the story confided to her by Merlin, and both gentlemen had promised to do all that was possible to bring about a better state of feeling between the Kentuckians. Each proceeded in his own way, and each produced his own effect; for while Merlin listened with respectful attention to the chaplain's clear and earnest arguments in favor of a Christian spirit of forgiveness even of the bitterest wrongs and insults, Judson found it impossible to resist Captain Karl's half humorous and all informal exhortations to confess that he had behaved

himself very ill both to Merlin and his relatives, and had fully justified the deep indignation entertained towards him by the former. Of the terrible justice he had so narrowly escaped at the hands of Merlin, the captain did not speak; partly because he feared to excite a resentment that would defeat his own purpose, and partly because Dora so earnestly desired to have her own share in the event kept from Judson's knowledge. The child, contrary to her habit, had taken a violent antipathy to this big black-bearded man, of whom Merlin had told such unpleasant stories; and as her duties never now led her to address him, she seldom approached the corner where he still lay.

Presently, however, a deeper anxiety than any connected with either of these men, took possession of the little girl's affectionate heart.

One day, after Captain Karl had been placed upon the convalescent list, and was well enough to amuse himself, at least a part of the time, Dora left the hospital for an hour or two, and, after wandering about for a little while, went into the chaplain's tent, to ask permission to go on with a book of his, that she had begun to read several weeks before.

Mr. Brown, after a few kind inquiries and remarks, handed her the volume of *Eastern Travels* for which she asked, and invited her to seat herself upon a sort of lounge, manufactured by the ingenious Hepburn, to read it.

Dora, absorbed in tales of harems, fountains, yashmaks, and other wonders, to her as great as those of the Arabian Nights, hardly looked up when Colonel Blank entered the tent, and so soon as she had returned his careless greeting, buried herself again in the charmed volume, and for another half hour was conscious of nothing outside it. At the end of that time, however, her attention was suddenly aroused by the mention of her own name. She glanced up abstractedly. Both gentlemen, sitting with their backs toward her, had become entirely forgetful of her presence, and were now discussing Captain Windsor's conduct in the slight skirmish where he had been wounded. The chaplain was apparently defending his friend, and trying to soften the displeasure that the colonel loudly expressed. The sentence that attracted the attention of the *vivandière* was this:—

“And taking Dora with him, besides causing him to disobey orders as to the hour of starting, was altogether out of rule. I never intended the child to be exposed in that sort of way. No, sir, there's nothing to be said in extenuation of such acts of insubordination and carelessness. Captain Windsor richly deserves to be degraded; it would be no more than an adequate punishment.”

“Pardon me, colonel, if I disagree with you. The lad is high-spirited, proud, and sensitive. He was not, at the time, nor is he now, aware of the severe construction you placed upon his negligence. Would it not be

better, by a friendly admonition in private, to show him your views and his own errors, than by undue harshness to alienate him from his commander, and possibly lose to the service of the country one of her bravest defenders? After all, we must remember he is himself the greatest sufferer from his disobedience."

"As it happens, yes. But it might very well have chanced that the whole command should have been surprised, and cut off, with that little sap of a lieutenant at their head, while the man whose business it was to lead them, was maundering about the country roads, trying races with the *vivandière*. No, sir, a severe public reprimand, in face of the regiment, is as light a punishment as such criminal negligence deserves, and he shall have it the first day he appears in public, as sure as my name is Blank."

"I am very sorry —" began the chaplain; but before he could finish the sentence the door flap of the tent was thrust aside, and two officers entered, with the purpose, apparently, of making a call.

Colonel Blank, with an expression of annoyance at the interruption, rose from his seat, and, after briefly returning the salutations of the two captains, left the tent.

Dora, gliding quietly behind the chaplain, also made her retreat, unobserved by him, until, just as she disappeared, one of the guests exclaimed, —

“Hullo! Is that a brownie, or our little *vivandière*, Brown?”

“It is Dora Darling. She has been reading here for the last hour,” said the chaplain, suddenly remembering that the girl must have heard the conversation between himself and the colonel, and wishing that he had seen her in time to give a warning against repeating it. A second thought, however, assured him of Dora’s caution and delicate sense of honor, and he seated himself to entertain his guests with his usual easy cordiality of manner.

Dora, meanwhile, as soon as she found herself in the open air, hurried after the colonel, who was striding away toward the outskirts of the camp, for his evening promenade.

“Colonel Blank!” exclaimed the *vivandière*, quickening her step almost to a run.

The colonel paused and looked around. “Dora Darling! And what do you want, my daughter?” asked he, kindly, as the child stood beside him, and raised her grave eyes to his face.

“I want to talk with you, sir,” said Dora, with a little hesitation, for the exact form of her petition was by no means clear in her own mind.

“Come, then, along with me, and we will talk and walk at the same time. I know what you want, already. It’s a splendid red, blue, and white ribbon, to wear bald-

ric-wise across your shoulder, with your flask fastened to its lower end. Now, isn't that it?"

"No, sir," said Dora, a little indignantly.

"No! Well, then you want a little drum, such as the *vivandière* in '*La Fille du Régiment*' is got up with. I've thought of it before, Dora Darling, but I concluded it would only be in your way; and I can't think of any use for it, except to summon aid in case you were captured or lost, and for that I've something far prettier to give you. It's a silver whistle, Dora, such as boatswains use on board men-of-war. It was given me by a friend in the navy, who found it on board a rebel gunboat that he helped capture. I was looking at it the other day, and thinking I would give it to you some time. Come up to my tent to-night, and you shall have it. Now, isn't that better than the drum?"

"Yes, sir, it would be very nice; but it wasn't a drum that I was going to ask for."

"Not a drum, and not a baldric!" cried the colonel, with an affectation of great surprise. "Then it must be sugar-plums; and those I have not to give you. There are none nearer than Monterey, I am afraid; and even there it's likely enough the graybacks will have eaten them all up. Shall I take the town, and find out about it?"

"It isn't any such thing as that, sir," said Dora, seriously, for she had now recovered all her usual determina-

tion, and was rather annoyed than amused at the colonel's raillery.

"What is it, then? I am at the end of my wits, and can guess nothing further."

"I want you to forgive Captain Karl — Captain Windsor, I mean," said Dora, bluntly.

The colonel dropped her hand, and looked both surprised and displeased.

"What do you know of my intentions regarding Captain Windsor?" asked he.

"I heard what you were saying, just now, to Mr. Brown."

"What! you were listening — were you?" exclaimed the colonel.

"No, sir. I never listen to things people say when they think they are alone; but you saw me in the tent; you spoke to me when you came in. I didn't hide away. I just sat still."

"And what made you keep so quiet that we forgot all about you? Wasn't it so as to listen?" demanded the colonel, the corner of his mouth quivering with a suppressed smile as he glanced at the crimson cheek, flashing eyes, and straightened figure of the little maid.

"No, indeed, sir. I was reading 'The Howadji in Syria,' and I forgot where I was, entirely, until I heard you say 'Dora;' and then I looked up, and you went on about Captain Karl, saying —"

“Never mind about Captain Karl, child. It is never well for little girls to meddle in the affairs of other people, especially people older and wiser than themselves. I am glad you were not an intentional listener to our conversation, for nothing is meaner than to try to overhear what is not intended for you; and I have only my own carelessness to blame. In future, however, you must speak or show yourself when you see that people have forgotten you, and are discussing private matters in your presence. Now I advise you to go back to the ‘Howadji,’ and leave regimental discipline to me.”

“But, sir, Captain Karl wasn’t to blame,” persisted Dora, in spite of the colonel’s frown. “He meant to go with the company; but we lost our way, and I advised him to keep right on, instead of turning back to look for the men.”

“And did you and he understand that I had delegated the command of the expedition to you, my dear?” inquired the colonel, grimly.

“No, sir. He meant to mind what you had told him, and I only wanted to help him do so. We both thought we should find the company quicker by keeping on than by turning back.”

“And what prevented him from taking the right road at first?”

“The guide was with the company, sir, and they were out of sight before we set out.”

“ Indeed! And pray why did Captain Windsor wait until his command was out of sight before he set out to lead it?”

The colonel smiled sarcastically, as he made this inquiry, and Dora again colored deeply, but nevertheless answered with courage, —

“ Because, sir, he waited to ask me to go, and then to get a horse for me, and then you kept us a few minutes — ”

“ And don't you know, child, that a soldier on duty has no right to neglect or swerve from that duty ever so slightly, and that many a brave fellow has lost life and honor for a smaller disobedience than this?”

“ There's no danger of Captain Karl losing his life?” asked Dora, quickly, and with whitened cheek.

“ No, not this time; but if you are his friend, Dora Darling, you will advise him not to risk as much another time.”

“ But what will happen to him now? I mean, what do you think you will do?”

“ What do I *think* I will do? That's an odd question; it sounds as if it was you, and not I, who *know* what I will do.”

Dora made no reply, and as the colonel looked sharply into her face, her eyes met his with a look of steadfast determination.

“ What are you thinking, Dora?”

“I am waiting, sir.”

“Waiting for what?”

“To know what you will do, so as to know what I shall do.”

“O, then you intend to take action in the matter—do you?” asked Colonel Blank, ironically.

“Yes, sir.”

“And what will you do if I administer a public reprimand to your hero? That is the mildest course contemplated.”

“I will speak as soon as you are done, and say that you are wrong, for it was I, and not Captain Karl, who was to blame, and should be reprimanded.”

“You’ll do that—will you?” asked the colonel, in great surprise.

“Yes, sir.”

“And what do you think I will do to you after such an act of insubordination, of mutiny, in fact?”

“You will do nothing, sir; for before I stop I shall bid good by to the men, and tell them all that I cannot be the daughter of the regiment any longer, because I cannot be the daughter of its colonel.”

“Then I’ll have you and Captain Karl drummed out of camp together to the Rogue’s March!” exclaimed Colonel Blank, in comic wrath.

“I don’t think you’d give such an order, sir; and if you did, the drummers wouldn’t mind you. Nobody

would ever like you again, if you even spoke of such a thing."

The colonel turned, and looked down at the slight, bright-eyed girl who thus dared to reprove and warn him. She was very pale, and trembled with nervous excitement; but her front was radiant with truth and courage, and her lips were set in the look that Joan of Arc might have worn as she walked to her death for the cause she had espoused.

Colonel Blank read the high heart in that fair young face; and, man like, longed to prove it.

"Come, then, girl," said he, with affected harshness, "it is you, after all, who are responsible for this breach of discipline; it is, therefore, you who should be punished. Say that I excuse Captain Windsor from all consequences of his fault, — will you bear them for him?"

"Can I? May I? What will be done to me?" asked the *vivandière*, earnestly, while a faint flush of mingled eagerness and apprehension stained her cheek.

"Of course you may, if it's right you should. And as for what the penalty shall be —" The colonel paused to furtively watch the anxious but unwavering face. "Let me see. A public reprimand would hardly be sufficient in your case. A little girl doesn't mind being reproved, as a man does. You might be shut up in the guard-house two or three days on bread and water. You'd be alone at night, and have no light, you know."

“ I shouldn’t mind that at all, sir, or the bread and water either,” exclaimed the young heroine.

“ No ; a better plan would be to send you back to that aunt whom you told me of. The woman you ran away from, I mean. I’ll send you back to her.”

The look of anxiety deepened into one of horror.

“ O, sir, won’t anything else do ? ”

“ No. If you take other people’s burdens on your own shoulders, you must expect to bear them. But you have your choice still. You may either suffer for Captain Windsor in this manner, or you may leave his affair in my hands, as you would better have done from the first. You needn’t hurry. Come to my tent in an hour, and let me know.”

“ Stop, sir, please ; I’d rather tell you now. My mind is quite made up, and will not change. I will go back to aunt Wilson.”

“ You will ? But how can I be sure you will go to her, even if you leave camp ? ”

“ Because I shall promise to do so,” said the child, simply.

Colonel Blank looked again at his *vivandière*, with keen and suspicious eyes ; but on that placid brow, and in those lustrous eyes, lay no shade of duplicity—on those still lips no coward’s tremor. And still, man like, he searched her heart.

“ I shall send back Pictet at the same time,” said he.

It will be better for you to have a companion, and he's not of much use here."

"No, indeed, sir, I wouldn't take him on any account. He's a servant, you know, and they'd treat him dreadfully if he went back. It would be very, very cruel. You'll not do that, sir — will you?"

"Yes. If you go, he shall go; and I'll send you both under a flag to camp Bartow, so as to be sure Pic don't run away on the road," said the colonel, savagely.

Dora looked at him with indignant astonishment.

"Why will you do so?" asked she; "Pictor has done no harm."

"No, but you have. I return him to punish you."

"But that isn't fair at all," cried Dora, passionately. "You can do as you like about me; if you're not satisfied with sending me to my aunt, you may shut me up in the guard-house first, but you haven't the least right in the world to meddle with Pic, and you shan't."

"And — I — *shan't!* Did I understand you to say those words, *vivandière?*" inquired the colonel, drawing himself up in simulated anger.

"Yes, sir, I did say so. It wasn't proper, and I shouldn't have said it if I had been the daughter of the regiment still; but now —"

"No; the daughter of the regiment never says 'shan't' to the colonel."

A merry quaver in the voice struck on Dora's ear.

She looked up quickly, but the face of the colonel was as cold and stern as before.

“Now, Dora,” said he, slowly, “suppose that I conclude to do just this thing: to send you and Pieter to the first rebel station, and let Captain Windsor go free. What can you do about it, and what will you say about it? Stop, now, and think.”

“I don’t want to think, sir. I don’t suppose I could do anything to prevent it, because you are a strong man, with a great many soldiers to do all you tell them to. But God is just as much stronger than you, as you are than me; and he will never, never let you be so wicked and so cruel, or, if he does, he will punish you for it. O, sir, you can do nothing half so bad to Pieter or to me, as the feelings God will put in your heart will be to you.”

“What sort of feelings, Dora?”

“Shame and sorrow; and, O, such a dreadful wish that you could go back and do it over, and such a dreadful feeling that you never can!”

“What do you know of such remorse as this, child?” asked the colonel, in astonishment, as he marked the intensity of emotion in the young face uplifted to his own.

“I killed my linnet because he wouldn’t eat out of my hand,” said Dora, in a low, quick voice, while her eyes sank, and the color burned fiercely upon all her face.

“And you feel that way about it?” persisted the colonel.

“ Yes, sir. I don’t think I could ever have been happy any more; but after a while, when I had asked and asked, and mother had asked for me, God forgave me.”

“ How did you know that? ”

“ O, by my feelings. I knew right off.”

“ And I suppose He would forgive me too, after a while,” suggested the colonel.

Dora solemnly shook her head.

“ I don’t think so, sir. Pictet is a man, and a man is a great deal more than a linnet — ”

“ *Cela dépend,*” murmured the colonel.

“ What, sir? ”

“ Nothing, child.”

“ You’ll not send Pictet back? ” recommenced Dora, in a moment.

“ I’ll think of it.”

“ Please tell me now.”

“ And why now? ”

“ I should like to know, if you please, sir.”

“ So that you may warn him, and help him off? ”

Dora made no reply.

“ Come, child, the truth. Was that what you meant to do? ”

“ Yes, sir.”

“ And you dare tell me of it, you audacious mutineer. Do you know the brightest idea I ever had in my life? ”

“ No, sir.”

“It was changing your name to Dora Darling. Now, be off with you to your hospital, and say not one word about this to any one before to-morrow morning. I will let you know my decision in the course of the evening. Promise me sacredly to be silent.”

“I promise, sir,” said Dora, raising her eyes to his.

“Good by, then ;” and the colonel, with a beaming smile, turned abruptly away to resume his walk, while Dora, sorely puzzled, returned to the hospital.

An hour or two later the *vivandière* received, at the hands of the colonel’s orderly, a little package containing a handsome silver whistle, wrapped in a bit of paper bearing this inscription : —

“THE REWARD OF MUTINY.”

CHAPTER XXVI.

DORA easily understood from the colonel's present, with its accompanying legend, that he cherished no very severe intentions with regard either to her or her friends.

Indeed, in thinking over her conversation with him, she came to the conclusion that he had all along exaggerated the danger and his resentment, for the purpose of inducing her to argue against him. Why he should have taken the trouble to do this she could not understand ; but as one day passed after another, and she found that neither Captain Karl, Pic, nor herself met with any untoward fate, she was quite ready to dismiss her fears and mentally thank the colonel for his forbearance, with no further attempt to understand it.

Captain Karl was now so entirely recovered as to resume his regular duties and his own quarters, as was also the private Merlin, while Judson had been forwarded to the depot of rebel prisoners at Columbus.

Before leaving hospital the rebel Kentuckian had sought an interview with Merlin, and the two men finally parted, if not in renewed friendship, at least in mutual forgiveness and kindly feeling.

Dora was now left with no especial object of interest under her charge, although she attended to those who remained with the same zeal and patient kindness she had always shown. The hours in the chaplain's tent and those spent in the open air were now, however, more precious than ever, and she gradually extended her rambles, even when quite alone, considerably beyond the precincts of the camp.

One afternoon, as he stepped from the door of the hospital, intending to go to Mr. Brown for permission to read a little, she encountered Pictor, looking very mysterious, and somewhat puzzled.

"I's jes' gwine ter see ye, missy," said he, in a cautious tone.

"Was you, Pic? Well, walk along with me to Mr. Brown's tent, and we can talk as we go."

"Le's go a leetle funder out o' camp. I doesn' know who's long ears may be a harkin' roun' here."

"Well, come this way, then," assented Dora, good-humoredly, as she turned down a narrow lane between the tents, leading to the outskirts of the camp.

Pictor walked beside her, apparently buried in the deepest of reveries.

"Well, Uncle Pic, what have you got to tell me?" asked Dora, at length, finding the silence not likely to be broken by her companion.

"Well, missy, I doesn' jus'ly know myse'f. I doesn' understan' de matter; dat am de truf."

“ If it is something about me, you had better tell right out all you know, and perhaps I can help you to understand it,” suggested Dora.

“ Dat ar’s de berry idee dat fotcht me here, missy, an’ yit I doesn’ know but I’s an old fool to pay any ’tention to de matter at all. Well, honey, de long an’ de short ob it is, ef we ’cludes it’s a sell, w’y, we needn’ go.”

“ Go where, Pic? ”

“ Lookin’ arter Mas’r Tom.”

“ Tom! Have you heard from him? ”

“ Can’t tell ’xactly, missy. Las’ night — or rudder dis mornin’ — de guard foun’ a brack feller prowlin’ roun’ dis yer camp, dat, bein’ ’terrogated, said he’d come to see Pictar Darley. So de guard send him long to de cook-house up dah, an’ w’en I gits up dis mornin’ I foun’ um waitin’ for me. It wor a boy ’bout as ole as you’s’e’f, an’ he gibbs his name as Bony party. But dat’s all nonsense, fer I’s seed a many parties as was bonier dan he, dat didn’ make no ’count of it. Now dere was a feller dat dey called de livin’ skilumton — ”

“ But what did this boy say about Tom? ”

“ W’y, he came roun’ kin’ of ’sterions, an’ waited till we was alone ’fore he let on what was his bizness any way. Den he wanted to know was you in de camp now. I ax w’y did he want to know. He say he got arrant fer ye from you brudder. I say, ‘Gib dat arrant to me, an’ I carry it to de young missus.’ ‘No,’ says Bony

party, 'I wants ter sec her myse'f; I's got a letter fur 'er.' 'A letter from who?' says I. 'From her own brudder,' says he; 'an' if she misses o' gittin' it, she won't neber forgib herse'f de longest day she hab to lib.' 'Well,' says I, 'if I fatches you to her, an' dere's any divilty in your arrant, I reckon you'll fin' de shortes' day you hab to lib is too long, for I'll fill it jes' as full o' torment for ye as an egg is full o' meat.' Den he sot to swearin' he wa'n't up to no tricks, an' swore so hard I 'bout made up my mind not to trus' a word he said; but den he showed me de letter, an' dough I couldn' read um, I t'ou't dere mus' be sumfin' buckra 'bout it, dere wor sech a power o' curlykews to de ends o' de long-tail letters, an' sech a big splurge under de name dat was at de bottom."

"But was that name Tom Darley?" asked Dora, eagerly.

"Dunno, missy; nor I couldn' 'suade Bony party to lemme hab de letter to fotch to you. Says he ain't gwine to deliber it to no one but you'se'f."

"Well, where is he? Why don't you bring him to me?"

"Den, agin, he say he couldn' stop anoder night, an' he mus' git outside de camp right d'rectly while he could; but he'd be waitin' fer you, jus' at sunset, out by de ole dead pine on de edge ob de wood."

"And the sun is just setting now! Dear me, Pictor,

why couldn't you have told me faster? Perhaps it isn't too late though, if I go as quick as I can."

"But I isn't cl'ar in my min' dat we'd best go at all, missy."

"There's no need of your going, Pic, but I shall certainly. Tom wouldn't have taken so much pains to send to me, unless there was something important to tell. I wouldn't fail to go for anything."

"An' won't ye ax de parson, or de cap'n, or some ob dem dat knows more'n we does?"

"I would, but there's no time. See, the sun is half down; there isn't a moment to lose. But I'm not afraid to go alone; you stay here till I come back."

"Guess dere's room in de noose fer my neck if dere is fer yours, chile," returned Pic, doggedly, as he quickened his shambling gait to keep pace with the fleet footsteps of the girl.

They soon passed beyond the precincts of the camp, and struck into a wild ravine leading down the mountain, and into the heart of the thick wood at its base.

"There is the blasted pine," said Dora, after a silent walk of nearly half a mile.

"Yes, an' orful lonesome it looks," muttered Pic, with a visible tremor in his voice. "Reckon dat's de place whar Ole Nick hol' his council wid Jeff an' de res' ob his sarvents in de 'federacy. Reckon, arter all, missy, we'd bes' back out o' dis yer scrape 'fore it's too late."

"I'm not afraid. Don't shiver so, Pic," replied Dora, rather nervously, as she paused to look about her.

The scene was indeed a savage one. The sides of the ravine, converging towards its lower end, were as precipitous and bare of vegetation as the walls of a prison. Overhead, the stormy sky hung low, with great masses of thunder-cloud resting, apparently, upon the crags at either hand. Below, the dense wood looked black and forbidding, while the rising wind moaned fitfully among its branches. In front of all stood the giant pine, its scathed skeleton showing ghastly white against the dark background of the forest.

The negro, impressible as are all his race, stood still, and shuddered again.

"Don' like de look o' dat place, missy. Dere won't be no luck in going any nigher dat tree, dat's sartin. T'ou't I see somefin' brack a-peekin' out dis berry minit."

"And didn't we come here to meet a black man, you silly old Pic?" asked Dora, impatiently. "Come, it will be dark in a minute or two."

"Dat'll jes suit de powers o' darkness dat ha'nts dis yer place," groaned Pic. "How does yer know but dat ar Bony party was de debil hese'f? De Bible say he go roun' like a roarin' lion a lookin' arter he prey."

"Well, this Bonaparte wasn't a roaring lion — was he?"

"Donno, missy. I neber seed one — p'raps he was widout my 'ceivin' it," said Pic, doubtfully.

Dora made no reply, but walked steadily on toward the wood, followed, at a little distance, by the trembling Pictor.

As they approached the pine, a figure suddenly glided from behind it, and came to meet them.

“Go 'long wid ye, Satan!” yelled Pictor, taking to his heels without an instant's delay; “yer hain't cotch dis chile jes' yet.”

Dora paused, and turned a little pale; for the negro who now approached presented so repulsive an appearance that Pictor's panic extended, in some degree, to his stouter-hearted mistress.

The face, intensely black in color and brutal in form, was disfigured by the loss of an eye, and of a part of the upper lip, leaving the gleaming teeth uncovered. More than this, the expression was at once servile and savage, although now overlaid with an assumption of deferential good nature.

“Glad to see you, mistress,” said the new comer, glibly. “I was most afraid that foolish nigger wouldn't give you the message, and Mas'r Darley would be awful disappointed not to see you.”

“You have a letter from him for me — haven't you?” asked Dora, coldly.

“Yes, miss; here it is. I had my orders not to give it into no hands but just your'n.”

“Yes; wait a moment till I read it.” And Dora, anx

iously unfolding the soiled paper, read with some difficulty, by the faint light, the following words : —

“ DEAR DORA : I’m going further South with my regiment. I have been sick, and am not very well now, and don’t believe I will ever come back. I’d like ever so much to see you before I go, more especially because I think I never will see you again. I darsn’t come inside the pickets, but this fellow will bring you to me to-night, if you’ll come. Do come, for I want to see you badly.

“ Your brother, Tom.”

Dora read the note twice through, and then slowly folded it.

“ Wha’s de news, missy ? ” asked a voice at her elbow.

“ O, you’ve come back, Pic,” said she, smiling a little.

“ I thought you’d run away.”

“ Run ’way, missy ! I s’prised you sould t’ink dat way ob yore ole uncle. I jes’ ’tired a few steps so’s not ter oberhear yore ’munications wid dis gen’l’man.”

“ O, that was it ? Well, Pic, this is a letter from poor Tom ; and he’s here in the woods somewhere, waiting for me ; and I *must* go and speak to him. He’s sick, and he’s going away off with his regiment, and, perhaps, may never come back. I am going to meet him now.”

“ Is you sot on it, missy ? ”

“ Yes, Pic, I’ve made up my mind.”

“ Well, honey, I tole yer ’fore we sot out dat ef yer was sot on puttin’ yore head inter de lion mouf, he’d hev to stretch he jaws wide ’nough ter take in ole Pic’s poll long wid it. De Bible say de servent hain’t got no call ter be wiser den his mas’r ; an’ ef my mist’s is a min’ ter act like a plaguy fool, I ain’t a gwine ter be no wiser.”

“ Then you will come, too? ”

“ Yis, missy. Go ’head, Bony party ; fotch us inter yer mas’r’s jaws as fas’ as you can leg it.”

“ Go on, Bonaparte ; we’re all ready,” added Dora, who felt much comforted, in spite of his grumbling, with Pictor’s resolution to accompany her.

Bonaparte, on the contrary, looked as if he found the company of the negro superfluous ; but he made no comment, and, at Dora’s command, he struck immediately into the wood, and rapidly led the party into its very depths.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE fading twilight, although barely sufficient to show the little party their path among the trees, was yet enough to bring out a thousand grotesque forms and shadows among the gnarled old trunks and tangled thickets, so that total darkness would have been less frightful, while, in addition to the moaning and howling of the wind, their ears were now assailed by the cries of numerous night birds and the smaller beasts of prey, who still roam these mountain regions.

Picter, keeping close to his young mistress, ceased not to mutter gloomy prognostics of their approaching fate, mingled with reproaches upon her wilfulness in placing herself and him in such a situation.

“Don’t, Pic,” said Dora at last; “we can’t make it any pleasanter by talking about it. Let us wait and see; or you, if you like, may go any minute.”

“Now, honey, chile, what for ye go talkin’ to ole nigger like dat?” inquired Pic, reproachfully. “I’s ready to go to de wuss place you eber hearn tell of, if you’s a mind fer to lead de way. But sence I gib up chawin’ terbacker, I’s got a orful habit o’ chawin’ words. I’s

gittin ter be a reg'lar ole scold, an' I reckon it's de wuss habit o' de two. I's been layin' out fer ter go inter de woods arter some spruce gum to set my teeth inter; 'spec it'll sweeten my temper 'mazin'."

At this moment Bonaparte stopped, and whistled shrilly three times, with an interval between each. The signal was answered from a short distance, and two figures were presently seen advancing through the gloom of the wood. Bonaparte stepped forward, and spoke in a low voice to the taller of the two men, who then advanced toward Dora, saying, —

"Well, Miss Do, so you've come back to see your friends — have you?"

"Dick! But where is Tom?"

"O, he's up to the camp, safe enough."

"Why didn't he come to meet me?"

"Well, he was busy, I expect; or else he didn't know you was going to be here."

"But, Dick, what do you mean? Tom wrote to me to come. It is to meet him that I am here!" exclaimed Dora, in much agitation.

"I know it, sis," replied Dick, putting an arm about her waist, and taking her hand in his; "but, you see, Tom's ideas didn't fay in with mine, no how. I saw you, the other night, on the hill up there, sitting with a chap I took for the parson of the regiment."

"Dick, it was you, then."

“Yes, it was me; and I set out to shoot him and carry you off then; but that black scoundrel there pretty nigh turned the tables on me. You’ll catch it, you old black cuss, when I get you home.”

This parenthesis, addressed to Pictor, who was following close to Dora, with a guard on each side, met with no response, the luckless philosopher being, for the moment, so overwhelmed with mortification, terror, and surprise, as to have lost the use of his nimble tongue.

“And is Tom really in your camp? and where is father? and where are you taking me?” asked Dora, indignantly.

“Don’t get mad, sis, and I’ll tell you all about it as fast as I can,” retorted her cousin, carelessly. “I told Tom, who is ‘really in camp,’ that I’d come upon you while I was scouting round the Yankee camp, and that I meant to try to get hold of you. But the fellow fired right up, and said you shouldn’t be touched — that you’d as good a right to choose your side as we had, and that you’d explained the whole matter to him before you parted.”

“Dear Tom!” murmured Dora.

“Well, it’s more dear Dora than ‘dear Tom’ with me,” returned Dick. “So, when I found he wouldn’t have anything to do with catching you, I set my wits to work to do it for myself. Think I made out pretty well — don’t you?”

“Then it was you who wrote the note ; and you sent that negro to bring me here ! It was all a trap, a bad, mean lie, and it was you that did it !” cried Dora, passionately.

“Just so, missy. But there’s no use in raving and tearing out your hair about it. If I ain’t your brother, I’m your cousin, and that’s most the same ; and I ain’t going to let no one hurt you, any way. I’m only going to carry you home to ma’am, and let her keep you till the war’s over, and you’re a little older ; and then I reckon I shall take you for my old woman. I like you first rate, Do, and home didn’t seem like home after you run away. It wasn’t anything but you brought me here ; and I didn’t enlist regular, because I always meant to leave any time when I found you out. I’m a sort of a scout and runner to the confederate general up here on Alleghany, but I don’t live in camp, though I draw rations. I’ve got a cabin down here a piece, and this fellow Clarkson and his nigger Bonaparte live with me.”

“Is there where you’re carrying me now ?” asked Dora, faintly.

“Just so. To-morrow I shall go and bid the general good by for a few days, and tell him not to break his heart before I get back ; and then I shall take you home, and tell ma’am, if she knows what’s good for herself, to treat you a little better than she did last time. There shan’t no one hurt a hair of your pretty little head, Do, not while I’ve got the heart of a man in my body.”

The last words were spoken with more feeling than Dick Wilson had ever before been known to exhibit; but Dora still indignantly shook off the arm he again tried to put around her.

"It's very fine to talk about not letting any one hurt me," said she. "But it's you that are doing me all the harm you can at this very minute. If you really care to make me happy, why don't you send me back to my friends?"

"I'm taking you to your friends; I'm your best friend myself," interposed Dick.

"No rebel is a friend of mine," exclaimed the *vivandière*, proudly; "I am the daughter of a Union regiment."

"And the sister and cousin of rebel soldiers," said Dick, slyly.

"I won't give up my brother as a brother, but I don't love him as a rebel; and as for cousins, I care no more for them than for any other rebels," retorted Dora, hotly, adding, in the next breath, "but father; you don't speak of him. Where is father?"

"Dead."

"Dead! When, and how?" asked Dora, in a voice of horror.

"He died of camp fever soon after he joined. I didn't know it till I saw Tom. You know, Do, it's what we've all got to come to, one time or another," began Dick, try-

ing to remember some of the remarks he had heard his mother use on similar occasions ; but his cousin gently interrupted him.

“ Yes ; I know. Please don't talk about it, Dick, just now.”

“ Certain I won't, if you don't want me to,” assented the lad, considerably relieved ; and not another word was exchanged between them until the party reached the door of a small and hastily constructed shanty on the edge of the wood.

From within the closed door was heard a hoarse bark.

“ Lope's on hand,” remarked the man called Clarkson.

“ Yes ; I expect he wants something to eat,” returned Dick, opening the door.

A large gray animal bounded out as he did so, and leaped upon Clarkson with a joyful whine, suddenly changed to a savage growl, as he caught sight of the strangers.

“ Hebenly Mas'r, what dat ?” exclaimed Pic, dodging behind Bonaparte, while Dora sprang to her cousin's side.

“ Don't be scart, Do,” said Dick ; “ Lope's an ugly fellow enough to strangers, but he won't touch you while we're round. You mustn't try to stir out of the cabin by yourself, though.”

“ What is it, Dick ? ”

“A wolf, child. Just such a one as eat up Red Riding Hood and her grandmother, in the story book.”

“But how came he here? Is he tame?”

“As tame as it’s the nature of the beast to be. I reckon they never turn into lambs, do what you will with them. Clarkson brought him up from a whelp, and he minds him pretty well. The rest of us don’t trouble him much.”

“Walk in, miss. Bony, you and this other darky fetch in some wood for a fire, and get some supper about the quickest. I’m as hungry as the — as a wolf,” said Clarkson, laughing loudly at the joke intended by his companion.

The laugh was obsequiously echoed by Bony, while Picter preserved a solemn and somewhat contemptuous expression. The negroes then returned a few rods into the forest to collect firewood, while Dora and Clarkson followed Dick into the cabin.

“Sit down on this log, Do,” said the latter, as he led her to a seat. “The old shanty ain’t much of a parlor, but we’ll do the best we can for you while you stay.”

A cheerful fire soon blazed upon the hearth, and Bonaparte, with some unwilling help from Picter, prepared over it a stew of chickens, salt pork, army biscuit, onions and potatoes, liberally seasoned with shreds of dried peppers and sweet herbs.

A pot of coffee, with sugar boiled in it, but no cream,

completed the repast ; and as soon as it was placed upon the table, Clarkson, Dick, and Dora sat down, while the two negroes and Lope remained in the background, hungrily watching the progress of the meal.

The stew was savory, the coffee potent, and Dora made a far better supper than she would have supposed possible, under the circumstances. As her body became refreshed, her courage and energy revived, and when she rose from the table it was with a firm, though undeveloped, intention to make her escape with Pieter from the hut before morning.

A deep growl from Lope, as she walked towards the door with the intention of looking out, warned her of one of the obstacles to her attempt.

“Be quiet, you brute ! He won’t touch you, miss, without you was trying to get away,” said Clarkson, significantly. “Now, boys,” continued he to the negroes, “fall to, and polish off the bones ; and you, Bony, see that Lope gets something. Not too much, though ; he’s got to watch to-night.”

Pieter and Dora exchanged a glance, and the quick wit of each divined the thoughts of the other.

Dora, returning towards the fire, contrived to stumble as she passed behind the log where Pieter was now seated at supper, and saved herself from a fall by catching at his shoulder. As she did so, she softly whispered, —

“Keep awake.”

“Take keer, missy. Keep your eyes wide open, honey,” said Pictor aloud, as he put out his hand to help her to her feet. Dora, with a quick pressure of the hand, signified that she comprehended the double meaning of the words, and then, fearful of attracting attention, she passed on, and seated herself beside the fire, with her back to the room.

“There’s a shake-down in the loft for you, Do,” said her cousin, seating himself beside her. “I got it all ready before I went after you.”

“You was very sure of finding me,” said Dora, rather bitterly.

“Yes; I reckoned I’d put a sure bait in the trap,” said Dick, complacently.

“I’m afraid it was your own bed up stairs — wasn’t it?” asked Dora, presently.

“No. Clarkson and I mostly camp down here by the fire, when we ain’t out all night on the scout. The nigger has slept up there, generally, but I put your bed at the other end of the loft, and there ain’t none of the same things on it.”

“And where is he going to sleep?” asked Dora, carelessly.

“Out in a kind of lean-to we put up, to keep a horse in occasionally. There ain’t any horse there now, and he and Pic can have all the straw to themselves,” said Dick, yawning.

Dora had now learned nearly all that she wished to know. One point, however, remained unsettled, and after a pause, she said, carelessly, —

“I should think that wolf would run away in the night if you turn him out loose.”

“No, he don’t. He knows too well where he gets fed. He never goes far from home.”

The heart of the brave girl sank, as she glanced at the glaring eyes of the wolf, who was now gnawing the bones thrown to him in a corner by Bonaparte, whose method of clearing the table was more rapid than nice.

“He looks pretty ugly,” said she, almost unconsciously.

“Ugly enough, any one would find him that came round the shanty nights. Clarkson has trained him so’s he’s better than any watch dog, and fiercer too,” returned Dick, significantly.

Dora sat for a few moments longer, looking thoughtfully at the fire, and then signified her desire to retire.

Her cousin, lighting a torch, preceded her up the ladder leading to an unfinished and windowless loft, where he showed, with some exultation, a comfortable looking bed in one corner, heaped high with dried leaves and branches of sweet fern, overspread by a large army blanket.

“There, Do. I fixed your bed myself, and I reckon you might find a worse one by looking sharp here amongst the mountains.”

“It’s very nice, Dick, and I’m much obliged to you,” replied Dora, looking sharply about the place.

“There’s no one else to be here — is there?” added she.

“No. And if you’re a mind to, you may push that board over the trap after I’m gone. I shall take away the ladder, any way. ‘Safe bind, safe find,’ you know.”

“Well. You had better go down now, at any rate,” said Dora, rather petulantly; for she was both alarmed and provoked to find that she was thus to be deprived of the only apparent means of exit from her prison.

Dick grinned significantly as he placed the torch upright in a knot-hole of the rude floor.

“Good night,” said he. “I’ll stick up the ladder time enough for you to come down to breakfast.”

So soon as the head of her cousin had disappeared through the trap, Dora pushed the piece of plank, serving as a door, into its place, listened to hear the ladder withdrawn, and then sat down to meditate upon the escape she was still determined to effect.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

AT the end of ten minutes of reflection, Dora suddenly thrust her hand into the pocket of her cloak, then into one after the other of those in her skirt, and finally from that of her jacket drew a stout, double-bladed knife, a present to the little *vivandière* from one of her numerous friends among the men.

“Good!” whispered she; “I was afraid I had left it at home. That will do, I know. But where can I begin?”

Placing her eye at one of the cracks of the floor, the prisoner next reconnoitred the position of her jailers. Clarkson had already thrown himself on the floor, wrapped in his blanket, and was soundly sleeping; but Dick had resumed his seat beside the fire, and seemed resolved to watch.

Dora noiselessly regained the bed of leaves where she had been sitting, and drawing from it the thick double blanket, proceeded to cut it into strips of about a foot in width, and six feet or more in length. Carefully tying these together in *square knots*, Dora found herself possessed of a strong band of woollen, twenty-four feet in

length. At this she looked for a while with much satisfaction, and then, coiling it upon her right arm, she nestled herself into her nest of leaves, and resigned herself to wait until Dick should be tired of his watch and fall asleep. That he should keep awake all night after his long and active day, she considered impossible, although she herself felt confident of being able to do so. And while confirming for the hundredth time her resolution to resist, at all events, the drowsiness stealing over her, the poor little maid fell fast asleep.

In about an hour, however, she suddenly awoke, gasping for breath, and in total darkness, except where one angry spot of fire close beside her couch glared up at her like the eye of a wild beast. It was the resinous torch burned down to the strip of leather placed around it as a safeguard, and expiring amid volumes of smoke combined from both wood and leather.

Dora's quick wits soon recovered from the bewilderment of her sudden awakening, and she rapidly and noiselessly extinguished the torch before thinking of anything else. Her next care was to ascertain her cousin's condition; but the room below was now in total darkness, and no sound was audible except the regular breath of the sleepers; for a few moments of attentive listening satisfied Dora that these must be at least two in number.

Before going to sleep, Dora had not failed to carefully note the position of her bed in reference to the other

parts of the loft, and mentally resolve upon her precise plan of action. She now, therefore, felt her way carefully along the rough wall until she reached the chimney.

This chimney, following the usual traditions of backwoods architecture, was built upon the outside of the house; but all along the line of contact, the boards of the slight shanty had so shrivelled and warped under the influence of the unequal heat, as to leave large cracks, through which the rough stones of the chimney were plainly visible. Below one of the largest of these cracks, Dora's sharp eyes had noticed that the wood was already considerably decayed, from the combined effect of heat and moisture; and at this spot she had resolved to make her desperate attempt to escape.

With the strongest blade of her pocket-knife she now began cutting away the soft pine as rapidly, and at the same time as cautiously, as possible, often pausing to listen for any movement below, as well as to take breath for renewed effort. The work soon became laborious, and the progress seemed painfully slow; but still the little hands toiled bravely on, and the stout heart beat higher and higher, as through the increasing aperture the pure night air stole sweetly in, and the bright stars looked encouragement.

An hour passed thus, and Dora, trembling from fatigue and excitement, saw that this part of her task was ended. The hole was of ample size to allow her

slender figure to pass, and was not more than half the length of her rope from the ground.

The next step was to fasten this rope, or rather band, securely inside. To do this, Dora returned to her bed, and standing upon it, felt carefully along the wall for a stout hook that she had noticed driven there, probably by Bonaparte for some purpose of his own. To this she firmly attached one end of the strip of woollen still wound upon her arm, and satisfied herself that both were strong enough to bear more weight than she should impose upon them. She next made her cloak into a bundle, and tying it to the other end of the strip, lowered it silently to the ground, and then, creeping through the hole, commenced her own descent. This was soon accomplished, although not without pain and terror, and Dora, with a throbbing heart, found herself once more at liberty. Detaching her cloak from the rope, she next cut off the latter as high up as she could reach, thinking it might prove useful in releasing Pictet, whom she was resolved not to leave behind.

Gliding cautiously round the end of the house, she approached the shed where she had been told he was to spend the night. The door stood partially open, and as Dora came in sight, the ungainly form of the negro was seen in the starlight, creeping cautiously out to meet her.

“Bress you, missy, so you done got cl’ar widout de

help of dis ole feller," whispered he, joyfully. "I's ben hard to work myse'f, an' hain't but jes' got frew, else I'd 'a been roun' ter help ye. Now, come; we'm got to make tracks 'fore mornin'."

"Yes, come, as fast as you can. That horrid wolf may be after us any minute," replied Dora, in the same tone, looking fearfully about her.

"Hi! Guess dat ar varmint ain't gwine ter trouble us much. I 'sposed ob him," chuckled the negro. "An' here's toder varmint, de one what turned agin he own kind, an' led anoder nigger into a trap," continued Pic, severely, as he stooped to raise on his broad shoulders a shapeless mass of something lying under a tree at some little distance from the hovel.

"Why, what is that?" asked Dora, in great astonishment.

"De varmint called Bony party, missy," grunted Picter, as he settled his load upon his back.

"Now, come 'long, missy. I know de way fus' rate. Tell yer, dis chil' kept he eye skun w'en dey was fotchin' us in; an' while de star shine dis a way, dey'll be better dan daylight fer show de path."

"But what are you going to do with this poor fellow, Pic? And why don't he move or call out?" asked Dora, pityingly, as they moved rapidly forward among the trees.

"I's gwine to make a 'xample ob him ter all traitors, missy," said the negro, sternly. "An' he don' sing out,

nor squirm, 'cause he tied up jes' like a lamb for de sla'ter, as de good book say, on'y dis ar am more of a young wolf dan a lamb. An' as fer singin' out, he got he mouf too full ob stick to 'varse much."

"But, Pictor, what do you mean by making an example of him? You mustn't kill him."

"Yes, I will, missy, sure an' sartain," replied Pic, decidedly. "I hain't got no 'pinion ob de breed, an' I ain't gwine ter hab it kep' up. De nigger dat 'ould sell anoder nigger ter be licked to def, as dem Wilsons 'ould 'a licked me, am too mean ter sell ter a Georgy trader, an I's a gwine ter red the aarth on him."

"Pictor, I never, never will consent to your killing this man in cold blood. I forbid it!" exclaimed Dora, pausing, and speaking in a more peremptory tone than she had ever used before.

Pictor jogged doggedly on, and made no reply. With a bound Dora overtook him, and laid a hand upon his arm.

"Stop, and answer me, Pictor, before we go any farther. Will you give up your plan of killing this man?"

"No, missy," replied the negro. "I hates ter go agin ye any way; but dis time I's made up my min' what ter do, an' I reckon I'll 'bide by it."

"And you will murder him?"

"I'll exercute him for a traitor, missy."

“Then my mind is made up, too. I shall go straight back to the shanty, call Dick and the other man, and tell them just where you are and what you are going to do. They’ll chase you, and perhaps kill you, and they’ll keep me; but it is all I can do to prevent this murder, and I shall do it. Speak quick, and say if you keep the same mind. In a minute it will be too late.”

As she spoke, she sprang backward, and stood out of reach, and out of sight of the negro, who, pausing where he stood, in the middle of a little star-lit glade, looked anxiously back at her.

“Now, missy,” began he, coaxingly, as he caught sight of a slender figure within the shadow of the wood, “wha’s de use ob good frien’s like we fallin’ out dis fashion? I wasn’ gwine ter ’spatch de feller ’fore you face an’ eyes. I’ll wait till we gets nigh home, an’ den you’ll go ’long forrad an’ neber know noffin’ ’bout w’at comd ob ’im.”

“No, Pictor. You must promise me not to hurt him in any way, and to let him go as soon as is safe for ourselves, or I shall do as I said,” returned Dora, firmly.

“Now, chile, dat’s w’at I calls contrairy. W’at dif-fence does it make ter you weder dere’s a Bony party more or a Bony party less in de worl’? You won’t neber see him agin.”

“No; but I shall see you, Pictor, and I never could bear to look at you, or speak to you, or even think of

you, if you did this cruel, dreadful thing. I should almost hate you, Pictor."

"Sho! Should you dat, missy?" inquired the negro, with more concern than he had yet exhibited. "Dat 'ould make old Pic feel awful bad."

"And so it would make me feel bad; but it would be so, I am sure. I couldn't help it," said Dora, earnestly.

Pic dropped his burden to the ground, and Dora now saw by the feeble light that the unfortunate captive had been enveloped in some large cloth or bag completely shrouding the outline of his form.

"Missy, I's got sumfin' ter say to you," began Pic, limping towards the spot where she stood.

"Wait, then, and promise not to try to catch me, before you come any nearer."

"Lor', missy, I hasn' got no f'outs ob it. All I wants is a 'sultation."

"You promise not to touch me?"

"Yes, missy, I promises."

"Well, then, what is it?" asked the girl, allowing her companion to approach close to her.

"W'y, missy, we can make a kin' ob a compermise, I reckon. Sence you's so dead sot agin it, I'll gib up takin' de life ob de varmint, but I wants ter gib him a scare dat 'll be mos' as bad, I reckon."

"What is it?"

"You'll see, missy. I hasn' jes' made up my own

miu'; but I'll promise, sure an' fas', dat I wcn't kill him."

"Well," said Dora, reluctantly, "you must promise that, at any rate, and if the other plan is cruel, you must change it."

"We shan't quarrel 'bout it, missy; but it won't do ter stop here much longer. We'll go ahead a piece, an w'en de daylight's up I'll 'spose ob him."

Picter, as he spoke, beut over the burden at his feet, and began to raise it upon his shoulders, when he was interrupted by a low exclamation from Dora.

"Wha's de matter, chile? Am dey comin'?"

"What is that noise? Hark! There it is again!"

Both listened eagerly, and through the hushed air of the forest night was distinctly heard the sound of a large body brushing through the undergrowth in the direction of the hut. This was suddenly interrupted by a snarling bark, followed by an angry howl.

"It's the wolf!" exclaimed Dora, in much alarm. Picter let fall the unwieldy burden already upon his shoulders, and crouched in terror beside it.

"O Lor'!" gasped he. "It's he ghos', fer sure. It's a comin' fer ha'nt us, an' I's noffin' bud a pore ole sinner as full ob handles fer de debil as a hedgehog's full ob quills. I shan't neber get shet ob him in dis worl', dat's cl'ar."

"Nonsense, Pic. There ain't any such thing as a

wolf's ghost," exclaimed Dora, impatiently. "Either Lope wasn't really killed, or it's some other wolf. Any way, he's coming after us. Hark!"

The sounds of pursuit indeed indicated that the animal, whatever he might be, was close at hand; but still Pictor remained crouched in the middle of the little glade, a victim to superstitious terror.

"I hung de varmint wid my own han's," muttered he. "Cotcht um nappin,' an got um noose roun' um neck 'fore he'd time 'o say he prayers. Strung um up, tie um rope, an' now —"

"But, Pic, we must defend ourselves! Quick! he's here! Haven't you any knife or anything?" cried Dora, springing to the negro's side, and seizing him by the arm.

"No knife, no gun, no silber bullet. Wha's de use o' fightin' de debil, missy?" groaned he.

Dora, without further parley, hastily untied the cloak that she carried in a bundle over her shoulder, and opened the strongest blade of the knife which had once before that night done her so good service.

"If you won't do anything but talk that way, I shall have to fight the wolf myself," said she, quietly.

"'Tain't no wolf, missy; bud I'll do de bes' I can agin it," said Pic, gloomily, as he struggled to his feet and grasped more firmly a stout oaken cudgel that he had appropriated at the shanty.

CHAPTER XXIX.

“Look there!” exclaimed Dora, in a low voice, pointing to the thicket where she had been standing a moment before. Out of the darkness now glared two balls of greenish light, shifting uneasily as the eyes of a human being met their furtive glance. The next instant they were gone.

“He’m gittin’ roun’ to ’tack us in de back,” suggested Pic, beginning to feel a little ashamed of his panic.

“Turn your face that way, and put your back to mine,” said Dora, hurriedly. “Take this knife, if you haven’t any, and I’ll hold my cloak ready, if he springs, to blind him till you can catch him by the collar — he’s got a collar.”

“If he Lope, he got collar, an’ plaguy tight neck hankercher, ’sides, fer I fitted um wid one not more’n a hour ago,” mumbled Pieter, doing as he was ordered. “Stan’ on dis yer karkidge ob de Bony party, missy; it’ll make you more my height.”

“No, indeed, Pieter. The poor creature must be nearly smothered now. Haven’t you any sort of weapon?”

“ Dere, now! Here’s de ole knife, shore ’nough. T’out I’d los’ um.”

“ I’m so glad! Quick! He’ll be on us in a minute! O, Pic!”

This cry of terror was extorted from the stout heart of the *vivandière*, by the sudden movement of the wolf, which, after entirely skirting the little glade, and finding no opportunity of springing upon his prey at unawares, broke into open fury, and, dashing through the underbrush, stood open-mouthed and eager-eyed before them, growling and snapping his fangs, while yet hesitating to make the direct attack.

“ Um ghos’ couldn’ make sech a debil ob a noise wid um teef,” whispered Pic.

The creature, opening wide his jaws, uttered a savage howl, and dashed across the glade so close to the little group, that his long hair brushed Dora’s dress. Darting back as suddenly, he made a savage leap at her throat, and would have seized it, had not the *vivandière*, with a sudden and decided movement, enveloped the head and neck of the beast in the folds of the cloak held ready upon both her arms for this very purpose.

The wolf, growling and snapping furiously, bounded backwards, and sought to tear away the covering with his paws; but Dora, twining her arms convulsively about his neck, cried, breathlessly, —

“ O, Pic, Pic, be quick! Kill him before he gets away.”

With an inarticulate howl, as ferocious and as cruel as that of the wolf himself, the negro threw himself heavily upon the creature, and plunged his long sheath-knife again and again into his body. With a dying struggle, the wolf tore himself out of Dora's grasp, leaped wildly up, and fell lifeless at her feet.

Pictor snatched away the cloak, and bent over the carcass.

"Look a' here, now!" said he, seizing an end of rope that dangled from its neck, "dere's de berry noose dat I lay roun' 'im neck up dere in de shanty. De ole sarpent cut hese'f down somehow, or p'raps de debil did it for um. Won'er how many libes he got, any way. Reckon we'll make shore work ob him dis time. Cut he head off."

Deliberately seating himself astride the body of the wolf, Pictor proceeded to carry his idea into effect. Presently he raised aloft the gory head, and viewing it complacently by the starlight, said, —

"Dere, now. See ef dat 'll hole you quiet till we gits inter camp. 'Specs it 'll git growed agin as soon as dat."

Dora, meantime, had retreated to the edge of the wood, and seated herself beneath a large tree. The danger over, strength and courage failed her together, and in the darkness she did not check the tears that rained down her pallid cheeks.

"Missy! Whar be you, missy? Want ter see um

head ob Ole Nick? De Bible say we'm got ter cut off whateber part 's de wickedes', les' we git souse, hide an' horns, inter de brimstone pon' ; so's I's bin a doin' de bes' I could fer dis yer sinner, wid cuttin' off he head. Reckon, dough, dat won' sabe 'im."

"Make haste, Pic, and let us get away from here," said Dora, faintly.

"Golly, den, I reckon you neber say a wiser word dan dat," exclaimed the negro, throwing down the head of the wolf, and hastily thrusting the bloody knife into his pocket.

"De Philustums 'll be down on us 'fore long, any way, an' we got two free mile afore us yet."

"Don't carry that poor boy any further. Leave him here till his master comes up. He's punished enough by what he's gone through already," expostulated Dora, as Pic began, groaningly, to raise his helpless captive once more upon his shoulders.

"Not if I knows it, missy. I's got my min' sot on settlin' 'counts wid dis yer fellow my own fashion ; an' I'll tote um from dis ter Jericho, 'fore I let um go ; 'twon' hender ns none, missy. See ef I don' trabel as fas' as yore pore lilly feet can foller, Bony party an' all."

Dora, too much exhausted by her late struggle for any further dispute, said no more ; and Pictor, having at last arranged his load satisfactorily, struck into the woods at a pace really incredible to one unacquainted with his immense strength and endurance.

Dora, lightly treading in his footsteps, kept close behind, glancing occasionally over her shoulder with a nervous terror of pursuit.

An hour passed, and the gray light of dawn came creeping down through the bare branches of the trees, bringing a chill blast from the north. Borne upon it came the distant sound of the *reveillé* from the federal camp.

“Hark! Hear dat, den, missy! Don’ dat soun’ like welcome home?”

“Indeed it does, Pic; and I begin to remember the trees and rocks about here.”

“Yes, we’m mos’ dere; but dere’s somefin’ to ’tend to ’fore we goes inter camp.”

“You’re not to do anything cruel to that hoy, you know,” expostulated Dora.

“Lor’s, missy, don’ be so ten’er ob dis ole cuss!” exclaimed Pictor, petulantly. “Don’ de Bible hese’f say de lab’rer’s got a right to he wages; an’ ef I hasn’ aarned de right to ’spose ob dis varmint, totin’ ’im all dis way on my own back, w’y, we’ll gib in de good book made a lilly mustake w’en it said that ar.”

Dora was still meditating upon this bit of special pleading, uncertain just how to answer it, when Pictor’s voice once more aroused her.

“Dere, missy, you knows dis yer, I reckon.”

Looking about her, Dora uttered a joyful assent. Be

fore her lay the desolate gorge, closed by the blasted pine where she and Pictor had kept the rendezvous with Bonaparte, resulting in their capture.

The negro hastily advanced till he stood beneath the pine, and then, with a groan of relief, allowed the body of the unfortunate Bonaparte to slip to the ground.

“Dere!” exclaimed he, straightening his back as far as practicable, and taking a long breath. “Reckon I feels now like dat ar feller mist’s read ’bout in de Bible one day, dat was a footin’ it for de hebenly city, but was awful hindered wid a big pack he’d got to tote ’long wid ’im; but, ’fore he know’d it, he come to a gate or sumfin’ dat was ’chanted, I reckon, for de ole pack tumbled off, an’ warn’t neber seen no more.”

“Why, Pic—that’s in *Pilgrim’s Progress*; it isn’t the Bible.”

“Neber min’, honey; it’s jes’ as good for a lusteration ob my meanin’,” returned the negro, pompously. “I axed mist’s what was in dat feller’s pack ter make it so orful heavy. She tole me ’twor sin, an’ dat dere wan’t noffin’ in dis worl’ so back-breakin’ fer a feller to tote as sin. Now, if dis yer,”—and Pic gave the unhappy Bonaparte a contemptuous kick,—“if dis yer ain’t a bundle o’ sin right cl’ar frew, I’s a bigger fool dan I t’out fer, an dere ain’t no two ways ’bout de diffikil’y o’ totin’ ’um. Now, missy, I won’er ef I couldn’ trive ter jes’ hitch all de lilly sins I’s got inside o’ me, on ter dis big bunch o’ sin, an’ so ’spose ob ’em all ter once.”

“I’m more afraid, Pic, that you’ll do something that will add to your own sins. Do untie him now, and let him breathe. We’re so close to our own camp there’s no danger.”

“Dat ar’s jes what I’s layin’ out ter do, missy,” said Pic, rather resentfully, as he took out his knife, and slowly cut away the piece of bagging wound around the body of his captive to make it more easy of transportation.

This covering removed, showed the unfortunate fellow’s limbs securely trussed, much after the fashion of a fowl prepared for roasting, and confined in place by sundry pieces of rope, which Pic now proceeded to sever. He then placed the captive upon his feet, his hack leaning against the old pine.

Dora, for the first time, caught a glance at his face, and uttered an exclamation of mingled pity and terror as she did so. A bit of stick, placed across the mouth by way of gag, was carefully secured by a bandage tied at the back of the head. Above this, the large, bloodshot eyes rolled with wild ferocity over the whole scene, resting at last in angry terror upon the stolid features of Pic. The deep color of the skin, blanched and sodden by fatigue mingled with apprehension, offered a sufficient contrast to a ghastly streak of blood oozing from a cut upon the head.

“Pic!” exclaimed Dora, passionately, “it is too

bad! I declare you shan't torment this poor creature any more; he's half dead already, and wounded, besides. Let him go; or, if you won't do that, bring him into camp, and give him up."

"Yes, an' see 'im slinkin' off, nex' day, wid all de news ob de camp, to de enemy. Ain't sech an ole fool as dat, missy. Wait lilly minit, till I blin' he ugly eyes, an' I'll 'xplain de needcessity ob exercutin' justice wid 'im."

Taking a long strip of the matting, Pic, as he spoke, tied it carefully over his captive's eyes, and then secured his arms behind his back, and tied his ankles together.

"Dere, Bony party, you jes' stan' still, an' tink ober de 'niquities ob your life lilly minit, an' by de time I's got back, I reckon you'll tank me kin'ly for my 'tention in reddin' you ob it."

A smothered growl from the captive responded to this recommendation, and Pic, laughing inaudibly, beckoned Dora to withdraw a few paces with him from the tree.

"Now, missy," began he, when they were out of ear-shot of the unfortunate Bonaparte, "I'll 'xplain de plan right straight out, an' den I spec's you'll lemme 'lone w'ile I carries um out. I's gwine ter make dat feller tink he's got ter be strung up, an' den I's gwine ter leave 'im to 'flect 'pon it, w'ile we'm gone fer our breaksus. Arter dat, I's gwine to fotch 'im inter camp, an' let de gen'l hab 'im fer a specimen darkey to sen' to de Norf. Dis is de

on'y one I eber seed dat comes up to he idees ob w'at a darkey'd ought ter be like."

"And is that all the harm you mean to do him, really and truly, Pictor?"

"Yes, missy. Hopes yer ken trus' yer ole uncle fer not tell lies to yer, honey."

"O, yes, Pictor. If you say so, I believe it, certainly," said Dora, hurriedly. "I will sit down here, and wait for you. Hark! There's the drum again."

"Reckon it's parade. Dey'll be sen'in' out a 'tachment fer look up de wandyeer pooty soon. I's got ter hurry up my cakes, I reckon."

"Yes, make haste; I want to get into camp."

"We'll hurry all we can, missy; but dese matters ob life an' death's 'mazin' solemn 'fairs," replied Pic, in a very distinct voice, as he re-approached his captive.

"Now, Bony party, ef you's all ready, I is. Don' s'pose you's got more dan half frew 'flecting on de sins ob you life, but you'd better skip de res', and come to de cap-sheaf one, ob playin' spy an' traitor 'gainst 'noder nigger, all ter help on white folks dat 'spises-an' hates us bof. Bony party, you can 'ford to be hung here, for w'en you gits whar you's gwine, Satan'll make you one ob de big bugs ob de kin'dom. Dat ar las' sin was jes' arter his own heart, an' yore shore ob your reward."

While speaking, Pic had carefully knotted together the lengths of rope used in trussing his captive for trans-

portation, and constructed a running noose at one end. This he adjusted to Bonaparte's neck, drawing it so closely as to be very perceptible to the wearer, but not so as to choke him.

“Dere, now, be patien' lilly minit lon'er, an' you'll see dat dis nigger, dat you was gwine ter 'liber to de tormenters, knows how to be massiful as well as jus'. I's gwine to min' de good book, dat say we hasn' no right ter kill de body, an' sen' de soul to hell all ter once. I's gwine ter fix it so dat you can go jes' w'en you's a min' ter, an' tell yer mas'r down dere dat yer come 'cause yer lub 'im so well yer couldn' stop way any lon'er. Now, den, reckon dis yer'll do.”

While speaking, Pic had been searching the edge of the wood for a stout sapling of suitable length for his purpose. Having selected one, he proceeded to cut it off at the root, and then trimmed the top, so as to leave an elastic pole, about three inches in diameter at the base, and ten feet in length. Resting the stouter end upon a rock beneath the pine tree, he laid the other in the fork of a young oak, about six feet distant.

“Dere, Bony party, you jes' step up on dat ar roos'. Lucky you's bar'fut — isn' it? Golly! I forgot you leg tied. Now, den, up you goes! Kin' o' hard to balance youse'f — ain't it? Reckon you'll hab to take lessons ob de ole rooster, on'y dere ain't no time left. Now, Bony party, lis'en to de serious 'vice ob a frien'. You jes' clinch

you toe tight roun' dat ar pole, an' 'tan' 'till as if you wor froze ; fer jes' de minit you tumble off, dat ar neckercher o' yourn 'll git so tight I 'fraid it 'll be 'mazin' oncomferble, fer I's gwine ter pull de rope tight, an' tie um to mighty stout lilly tree back dere — looks ef 'twor sot a purpose."

And in fact, Pictor, after throwing the end of the rope over the lowest limb of the pine, drew it so tight as to slightly pull upon the neck of the trembling captive, and then turned it once about the stem of the little tree whose position pleased him so well, but neglected to secure it.

"Now, Bony party, I's got ter be gwine, an' I bids yer good by. Don' hurry youse'f 'bout steppin' off de pole ; you's welcome to roos' dere jes' as lon' as you's a mind ter ; an' I hopes you'll profit by de 'tunity for 'flection. My 'spec's to yer mas'r."

CHAPTER XXX.

PICTER, walking backward up the glen, absorbed in admiration of his own ingenious mode of torture, was startled by a hurried cry from Dora.

“Picter, Picter, I say! Hurry! run! They’re coming!”

“Whar? Who does you see, missy?” gasped the bewildered negro, as he suddenly faced about, and saw his young mistress flying up the ravine as fast as she could get over the ground.

“The men — I saw the guns — they’re in the — wood — coming after us. Run! run!” panted Dora, without slackening her speed.

Lumbering along as swiftly as he could, Pic followed in her flying footsteps, but, keeping his head turned over his shoulder, tumbled over a loose stone, and measured his length upon the ground. At the same instant a rifle ball whistled through the air where his head would have been had he remained upright.

Dora stopped, saw that her old friend had fallen, wounded or dead, as she supposed, and rushed back as fast as she had fled.

“Go 'long, missy,” whispered the prostrate negro, without stirring. “I isn' hurt; bud dey'll tink I's done fer, an' won't min' me agin. Dey won't shoot you, bud dey'll cotch you ef you waits. Cl'ar, I tell yer, 'fore dey comes up.”

“O, Pic, I can't. They'll bayonet you, perhaps, even if they do think you're dead. Can't you run?”

“No; dey'd on'y shoot agin, an' p'raps hit. Cl'ar, honey. It's de bes' for bof.”

Dora, in an agony of doubt and terror, looked down the ravine. Clarkson and Dick were bursting from the underbrush just beyond the old pine, beneath which Bonaparte still stood trembling, and, with a fierce cry of triumph, were rushing towards them.

“I won't leave you, Pictor — they're coming fast,” said she, hoarsely.

At that moment the sound of horses' hoofs, ringing in regular order along the rocky path crossing the head of the ravine, struck upon the ears of both.

“Dere's de picket gwine out — holler, missy! Screech yer pooties'!” exclaimed Pic, in an under tone.

Dora, without reply, snatched from her bosom the silver whistle given her by Colonel Blank, and blew through it a shrill succession of sounds in the order agreed upon between her and Captain Karl, as a signal of danger.

A loud shout responded from above, and a savage

curse from below, as the piercing sounds and their meaning reached the ears of the federal soldiers and the rebel scouts at the same moment.

To both Dora replied with a triumphant blast upon the whistle, as the well-known faces of a score or so of her friends, headed by Captain Karl and the chaplain, appeared at the head of the ravine. But the joyous sound had not died away before the crack of two rifles from the wood below responded angrily, and two men fell wounded to the earth.

“Sergeant Brazer, take a couple of files of men, and see after those fellows,” said the captain, hastily. “Fosdick, have these poor lads carried to the hospital.—Now, Dora Darling, tell me, this minute, how you came here, and where you’ve been, and how you dared give us such a fright. We were just going to look after you, and the whole regiment would have gone with us, if they’d got leave.”

But Dora, who first had laughed and then tried to speak, when she found herself once more in safety, was now crying as if her heart would break. Even her elastic courage and endurance were exhausted by the scenes of the night and morning, and the heroine gave place to the little girl, who longed for nothing so much as her mother’s arms.

Mr. Brown quietly seated himself upon the ground beside her, and drew her head upon his breast. “Lie there,

Dora Darling, and cry all you will," whispered he, tenderly.

Captain Karl posted himself at the other side, and Pic jealously crept up to the feet of his little mistress; but the child clung close to the strong heart so full of love for her, and was comforted.

"Come, then, Pic, you shall tell the story," said Captain Karl, somewhat impatiently. "Where under heaven have you both been, and how came you here just now?"

Picter, nothing loath to narrate a tale where himself played so conspicuous a part, commenced his narration in a pompous style, considerably modified, as he went on, by Captain Karl's frank comments upon his want of judgment in falling into the trap, and in lingering upon his escape until he came near being recaptured.

Dora, who gradually recovered her self-possession, defended her sable ally with spirit, and Pic himself was voluble in explanation and argument; so that the story was not yet finished when Sergeant Brazer returned, bringing the unfortunate Bonaparte as prisoner, and reporting that he could find no trace of the rebel scouts. Lieutenant Fosdick also reported the wounded soldiers safely lodged in the hospital.

"Then I must go and take care of them," said Dora, springing to her feet.

"Will you have my horse, Dora Darling? I shall be

most happy to relinquish him, and will put you on into the bargain."

"No, I thank you, Captain Karl," said Dora, blushing brightly as her eyes met Mr. Brown's. "I had enough of riding the other day, when we went foraging," added she, laughing.

"And I should have had altogether too much of it if you hadn't been along, Do. 'I reckon,' as we say here in Virginia, you saved my life that time."

"By 'being along'? They don't say that in Virginia, any way," retorted Dora, mischievously.

"Nettle! When you live in New York with me, you'll add 'being along' to 'reckon.'"

"But I'm not going to live in New York with you. I'm going to Massachusetts when we're mustered out," said Dora.

"'When *we*'re mustered out!' For goodness' sake, chaplain, hear that midget talk!" exclaimed Captain Karl.

"What do you think of going to Ohio to live with me, Dora, when that time comes?" asked the chaplain, pleasantly.

Dora glanced shyly from one to the other.

"I'd like best to live with the aunt I'm going to look for, and have you both come and see me very often," said she.

"You little coquette! You want to secure us both,

do you, and keep your own liberty? There's the feminine element cropping out with a vengeance!" exclaimed the gay young captain. But Mr. Brown looked a little disturbed at the turn given to the conversation, and Dora, blushing angrily, made no reply.

"We're apt to forget what a little girl you are, after all, Dora," said the chaplain, pleasantly, as they reached the entrance to the hospital, "you are so womanly in many things."

"And so manly in many more," added Captain Windsor, with a mocking salute, as he passed on.

Dora's eyes filled again with tears as she hastily sought her own little tent; but when, a few moments later, she reappeared, and went about her customary duties, her face had resumed its usual sunny calm, and her manner its wonted steadfastness.

CHAPTER XXXI.

“GOOD news, Dora Darling! The best of news! Come out here, and you shall know it,” cried Captain Windsor at the door of the *vivandière’s* tent, one cold morning, some weeks after the adventure narrated in the last chapter.

“What is it that makes you so glad?” asked Dora, smilingly, as she made her appearance fully dressed.

“It’s a secret, you know; though, like most army secrets, every one in this camp, and probably as many in the rebel camp, know all about it; but, just for form’s sake, I’ll whisper it in your ear, and you mustn’t tell it to any one else.”

“I won’t tell,” promised Dora, seriously.

“Don’t; unless, indeed, you find some one who hasn’t heard it. But, hark! we’re going to have a crack at the graybacks, and a lot of us have got the colonel to promise to take you.”

“Into action? O, good!”

“He didn’t want to; but we asked him, What’s the use of having a *vivandière*, if she’s not to go to the scene of action? And we’ve all vowed to take the best of care,

and the chaplain is to have special charge of you, and you're to ride in an ambulance, and the old man says you're not to come within range till the shindy's over."

"O, but I must! I'm going to help the wounded men all the time, you know."

"I know; yes, and I know, too, you'll catch it if you don't obey orders, miss. It's as much as ever you've got leave to go at all; and I swore till I was black in the face that you should be kept out of harm's way. Are you going to make me perjure myself?"

"You shouldn't promise for other people, and it's very wrong to swear about anything," said Dora, solemnly.

"But, my dear little parsoness, this kind of oath is only wrong when it is broken; so, if you get yourself into mischief, you will not only suffer in your own proper person, but will bring deathless torment upon me for false swearing — don't you see?"

"And I am to put on my flask, and water-keg, and all the things?"

"Do you call that an answer to my elaborate argument, you provoking creature? Yes, you're to be rigged out in all your traps, not forgetting the whistle. That's the order, by the way, and I was intrusted with it officially, though you may think my style of delivery somewhat unofficial."

"And when is it to be?"

"One would think, to look at you, we were talking of

a dance, or a picnic. Are all girls such bloodthirsty little creatures?"

"O, Captain Karl, that's not kind! I'm not blood-thirsty a bit."

"Now, Do, are you quite certain about that? Don't you really enjoy dropping a rebel, and seeing him kick?"

"Captain Karl!"

"Well, it was you, any way, that put Picter up to rigging that poor nigger to the pine tree, that day, and leaving him there to scare himself to death."

"Indeed it wasn't! I begged and prayed him to let him go," said Dora, indignantly.

"Tell that to the marines! He's escaped — did you know it?"

"Who, Bonaparte?"

"The bony party, as Pic calls him. Yes, he's escaped; but whether North or South, is more than I can tell. Pic vows he'll shoot him the minute he claps eyes on him, if he should ever be so blessed again."

"I hope he won't be, then."

"O, you want to keep him for yourself — do you? Well, perhaps we shall fall in with him to-day."

"Is it to-day? Why didn't you say so sooner?" exclaimed Dora.

"Time enough, young woman. Don't be in too great a hurry. We don't move till somewhere near noon, and it's only eight o'clock now. You're to report to the

chaplain as soon as you're ready, however. I suppose he's going to use the spare time in giving you good advice, and reading you a tract or two."

"Don't laugh at Mr. Brown, Captain Karl. I don't like it," said Dora, seriously.

"Laugh at him! I'd as soon laugh at a black-maned lion. I'm awfully afraid of him — didn't you know it? Almost as much afraid as I am of you."

"I believe there's nothing you are afraid of, good nor bad," said Dora, petulantly.

"Yes, there is. I'm afraid of teasing Dora Darling till I come to the end of her patience; so I'm going to stop short and take myself off. *Au revoir.*"

"Does that mean good by?"

"It means good by till I see you again."

"O! Then I'll say in English, Good by till I see you again."

Captain Karl, with a laugh, and a feint of boxing the ears of his saucy playmate, left the tent, and strode merrily away, singing, —

"O, saw ye the lass with the bonny blue een?"

while Dora hastened to pay a short visit to each of her few patients before making herself ready for the excursion.

A few hours later, a column of two thousand men wound slowly down the mountain side, with pennons

waving, banners drooping, horses prancing, accoutrements flashing in the wintry sunshine, while the musicians pealed forth a triumphal march, until the welkin rang responsive to the strains of hope and exultation.

In the rear of this brave array came a train of ambulances — sad memorials of the price that must be paid before these brave hearts should return as conquerors. In one of these ambulances rode Dora Darling, doomed, sorely against her will, to this ignominious conveyance, instead of her own sturdy little feet. But the colonel was inexorable. “If the *vivandière* is to go at all, she must go in an ambulance,” said he; and no one dared dispute his law. So Dora was fain to sit in silence, or to chat with the chance visitors who, once in a while, rode up beside her carriage, or begged a seat within, if they chanced to be of the infantry.

Mr. Brown came more than once, and so did Captain Karl, although the visits of the latter officer had rather the air of a stolen pleasure, and Dora noticed that he often looked anxiously forward to the head of the column, where Colonel Blank’s stately figure rode steadily on, leading the van of the long array.

“I’m afraid you oughtn’t to be here, by your looks, Captain Karl,” said Dora, mischievously, at last.

“Do I look like a truant?”

“Very much.”

“Well, it is true that the old man said I had better

keep away from you on this expedition, lest we should both turn up at Monterey, or some other rebel settlement, and the whole command would have to leave all to go and rescue us."

"Did the colonel give you an order not to talk with me?" asked Dora, anxiously.

"O, no, — only a sort of jocosé warning; but his jokes are always rather leonine; one doesn't care to have them carried too far."

"You had better not come to me, then. I shouldn't like to have to beg you off again."

"Beg me off, you little mischief! What does that mean?"

"Indeed, I shan't tell you. It's my secret, and I'm not going to share it. But see — the column is halted. Make haste back to your place, bad boy."

Captain Windsor, with a grimace of annoyance, obeyed the counsel of his little friend, and when Colonel Blank, riding slowly down the column, came opposite Company Z, its youthful commander stood with military precision at his appointed station.

A short halt for rest was now allowed, and a company from the — Ohio was deployed for skirmishers, although the scouts had reported the rebels entirely withdrawn from the vicinity of Cheat Mountain.

Dora gladly took the opportunity of escaping from her moving prison, and scrambled gayly up the steep hill

under which her ambulance had halted, looking for nuts and wild flowers. Under a great chestnut she found a group of her own men, among them Merlin, feasting upon such spoils as the squirrels had left to them.

The *vivandière* was greeted with cordial exclamations of welcome, and while Merlin spread his great-coat for a seat, his comrades collected all the chestnuts they could lay hands on, and poured into her lap.

Dora laughingly protested against thus depriving her friends of their treat; but, as the readiest spokesman of the party eagerly said for the rest, it did them all far more good to see "the daughter" eat chestnuts, than to feast on roast turkey themselves.

Dora, in turn, insisted that they should at least partake with her; and the men, throwing themselves upon the grass, surrounded her with an admiring circle, where quiet jokes and modest laughter from the courtiers mingled with sage bits of counsel, or information from the little queen.

Suddenly, with a glitter of embroidery, a jangle of scabbards, a nodding of plumes, a group of staff officers appeared upon the scene, accompanied by Colonel Blank, who, pausing in his conversation as his eyes fell upon the merry circle, frowned and bit his mustache.

"Upon my word," lisped a fair-haired aide-de-camp, raising his glass to look at Dora, "these fellows are more fortunate than their betters. What sunburnt beauty have we here?"

“It is the *vivandière* of my regiment, Lieutenant Cyprus,” said Colonel Blank, so haughtily that the young fellow, dropping his eye-glass and his flippant manner at once, merely bowed a reply, and strolled away.

“I have heard of the *vivandière* of the Twenty — Ohio,” said, courteously, a fine-looking, gray-haired cavalry officer. “Will you introduce her, colonel?”

“Certainly, captain. Men, return to your lines, and be ready to fall in directly. Dora, come here. This is Dora Darling, Captain Bracken.”

“I am glad to see you, my dear,” said the elder officer, kindly extending his hand. “I have heard of your attachment to the Union cause, and the good service you have done our wounded soldiers, and I am glad also to thank you, in behalf of all Union men, for your devotion to the cause.”

“Thank you, sir, for saying so; but it’s only a little that I can do compared with what you and the other leaders are doing,” said Dora, with shy self-possession.

“Did you ever read about the mouse and the lion, my dear?” asked the captain, smiling.

“No, sir. Mr. Brown hasn’t many books here, and I never had any others. It doesn’t tell about a mouse and lion in any of them, I think.”

“Well, you must ask Mr. Brown to tell you about it, when he has time. And what do you expect to do at Camp Baldwin to-day?”

“Is that where we are going, sir?”

“Yes. We are expecting to reconnoitre there much after the fashion of the other day at Camp Bartow.”

“There will be fighting, then?”

“I hope so.”

“Then there will be wounded men, and I shall carry them water and spirits; and if they are faint I shall give them hartshorn, and let them smell at the salts, and so keep them up till the surgeons come. That is what they have me for.”

“O, that is what they have you for! And aren't you proud of holding so prominent a position?”

“I have nothing to be proud of, sir, for I have not had a chance to do anything yet,” said Dora, modestly.

“Well, my daughter, I think you will have before the day is out,” said the captain, good-humoredly. “But mind that you keep out of the way of danger.”

“I can't do that, sir.”

“And why not?”

“Because, then I couldn't do any good, sir.”

“It won't do any good to yourself to get shot. You must remember that you have to take care of yourself first of all.”

Dora's eyes flashed

“If you really thought so, sir, you wouldn't be here to-day. That isn't the rule for a soldier.”

“But you're not a soldier, my little girl,” persisted the captain, laughing.

“No, sir; but I’m not a coward, and it is only a coward who would leave his duty undone for fear of getting hurt.”

“And it’s only a very brave and true-hearted little girl who could fill your place, Dora Darling.”

“I’m afraid I don’t half fill it myself,” said Dora, simply.

“Good by for the present, my dear, and remember, at least, that we who fill important positions have no right to be other than careful of our lives. The Twenty — would ill spare their *vivandière*.”

“Good by, sir,” said Dora, saluting with military precision.

“Take care of that girl,” Colonel Blank, said the elder officer, as they moved away. “She’s an original, and a very valuable one, too; a beauty, with all the rest.”

“Beauty is her smallest charm in my eyes,” said the colonel, enthusiastically. “She is meant for something better than camp life. I am thinking of sending her home to my wife for a daughter. We have none of our own.”

“Not till the war is over. She has a ‘vocation’ for heroism, evidently. You musn’t deprive her of her opportunities.”

“I don’t like to have her so much with the men,” said the colonel, discontentedly.

“It’s the very thing many of them need,” replied the

captain, gravely. "A humanizing influence may be the saving of many a wild fellow among them, and no influence is stronger than that of a young and enthusiastic woman."

"Dora is not a woman."

"It is hard to remember that, when one hears her talk; and she is of woman's stature already."

"Still she is but fourteen, and is yet young enough to be taught all that she lacks. I shall certainly adopt her as my own daughter," rejoined the colonel, decidedly, his previous vague desire suddenly strengthened into a purpose by his friend's admiration of its object.

The order to fall in was now given, and the column was soon in motion. An hour later it wound into the valley of the Green Brier, and Dora, with intense interest, identified the scene of the battle she had witnessed some months before.

"There is where the rebels lay in ambush, and just here is where our men stood waiting for General Reynolds to come up," said she to the driver of the ambulance; "and up there was Loomis's battery, and there was Howe's; and O, do you remember how Captain Daum took his one gun away up there, and how the poor little German ran away, and Captain Daum whipped him with his sword? — And now we come in sight of Buffalo Hill. I never knew, till last night, that the rebels had left their camp there. Why did they, do you suppose?"

“I guess they was too scart to stop any longer,” drawled the driver, with a triumphant grin upon his broad face.

“And up there is where Pic, and I, and poor old Jump were hiding in the woods. Poor Jump! he took cold that night, I’m afraid, for he died a few weeks ago,” added Dora, mournfully.

“The hosses fares as well as the men, only their widers don’t get no pinsions. That’s all the odds,” said the man, a little bitterly.

“O, but the men are fighting for their country, and for liberty, and for glory, you know. They come to the war, and go through all sorts of things, because they know it’s right, and they couldn’t be happy to stay away; and the horses, poor things, just come because they can’t help it. So they are to be pitied a great deal more than the men—don’t you see?” argued Dora, enthusiastically.

“Don’ know as I do. I didn’t come for none of those things, and I guess there ain’t many as did.”

“Why, what else did you come for?” asked the *vandière*, incredulously.

“I come for thirteen dollars a month, rations, clothes, and four hundred dollars bounty,” replied the driver, stolidly; “and I guess, miss, that’s about all the glory the most of them fellers trudging along there expect or care for.”

“I’m sorry you think so, but I don’t believe you’re

right," said Dora, rather loftily ; and after that she made no more conversation with her escort.

Passing over the field of the previous battle, the Union forces marched without opposition to the foot of the hill that at their last visit had bristled with hostile bayonets, and launched flames and death upon them from a score of iron throats. Camp Bartow lay beneath the wintry sky, silent and deserted, the lonely burial-ground of many a malignant traitor, and many a deluded follower of men more subtle and more wicked than himself.

Again the federal force was halted, and this time within the deserted camp. It was now eight o'clock in the evening, and the wearied troops were allowed ample time for rest and refreshment, although no fires were allowed, as the expedition was intended to be kept as secret as possible, until it should reach its destination, now generally known to be Camp Baldwin, the rebel fortified stronghold upon the summit of Mount Alleghany. To this place the garrison of Camp Bartow had withdrawn soon after the battle of Green Brier, and had there been re-enforced, so that the present garrison was estimated at from two to three thousand men.

To oppose this force, General Milroy led, as has already been stated, about two thousand Union troops, and the plan of operation was now declared.

The Ninth Indiana and Second Virginia regiments, comprising about half the force, received orders to march

along the river side upon the old "Greenbank road," with the purpose of attacking the enemy upon his left, while the Ohio regiments, with the Thirteenth Indiana and Bracken's cavalry, were to keep the Staunton turnpike until reaching a position where they could take the enemy upon his right, and coöperate with their comrades on the left.

The different regiments were hardly detailed for these two divisions, when the order came to march, and was immediately obeyed by the Ohio and Indiana boys, accompanied by the dauntless Bracken cavalry.

An hour later the other division followed them, and Camp Bartow was left once more to the foxes, and the owls, and the lonely winter night.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE cheerless dawn broke at last, and Dora, shivering as she wrapped her cloak about her, jumped impatiently from the ambulance.

“What *are* we waiting for?” asked she, at length, of the driver, after wandering about for a few minutes, in the vain effort to restore her chilled circulation, and gain some clue to the provoking detention that was causing an impatient murmur all along the line.

“Don’t know, miss, but guess it’s so that the rebs shall be sure to find out we’re a coming, and get breakfast cooked all ready.”

“Dora!” said a low voice at her elbow.

“Captain Karl—is it you?”

“Yes; I’ve run back to see how you were getting on in this confounded chilly place.”

“I’m a little cold, but it’s no great matter,” said Dora, cheerfully. “What are we waiting for?”

“To hear something from those other fellows. A scout has just come in to say the road is all blocked up with timber, and the last three miles of their route is just like

crawling up a wall. They won't be in for the fight, any way; so I don't see the use of stopping here. We might as well go ahead, and gather our own laurels, without regard to theirs."

"What a pity! But they knew the road would be steep, I suppose."

"Yes, but they couldn't know of the timber, 'cause why, the graybacks have just cut it. Secret expedition indeed! I'll bet my head to a China orange they've been standing to their guns all night waiting for us, and are as disgusted at this delay as I am."

"It's getting lighter, any way. Hark! There's firing ahead."

"Yes. Our advance has met their pickets, I suppose. Well, there's no more use in trying to keep dark; I suppose we may go in now."

And, in fact, the order to march followed Captain Karl's last words so instantly, that he had hardly time to regain his company before it was in motion.

Leaving the road, the division now began ascending the steep and wooded mountain, over rocks and briers, pitfalls and felled timber, for about a mile, when it was again halted in the skirt of a wood, with the enemy's camp in full view.

The general commanding, who had remained with this division, now perceived that he must commence the attack single-handed, as there was no appearance of the

other force, and the rebels were drawn up within their lines in battle array.

A company of the Indiana men were deployed upon the right, and one of the Ohio volunteers upon the left. Among these was Merlin, who, finding himself at the extremity of the line, and hidden among brushwood from observation, either of the enemy or his own comrades, resolved to imitate, in some degree, the hero of Bunker Hill, who was found "fighting upon his own hook."

Creeping cautiously forward to the edge of the woods, he found himself within a hundred yards of one of the cabins within the fortification, and noticed, with some indignation, a rebel officer standing in the doorway, and haranguing his men vehemently, emphasizing his remarks by contemptuous gestures towards the federal force. Carefully raising his rifle, Merlin took deliberate aim, and was just about to pull the trigger, when the slight noise of cocking a piece arrested his attention, and, glancing aside, he caught the glitter of a pair of eyes sighting along a clouded barrel, at about half the distance from him that he was from the officer.

A single glance was sufficient, and the Kentuckian dropped prostrate behind the log he had used for a rest, just as the flash and "ping" of the rifle heralded the ball meant for his brain, but now whizzing harmlessly some eighteen inches above it. A rebel sharpshooter had evidently been seized with the same idea as Merlin, and was merely halting on his path to glory and

the Union forces to give a quietus to the venturous Kentuckian.

Creeping along to the end of his log, Merlin very slowly and carefully peered around it. The experiment had nearly been a fatal one, for another bullet whistled so close to his head as to cut his hair.

“Come, then, we’ll have it out,” muttered he, looking about him for a cover that would allow of more motion than the small log where he now lay.

Close behind him rose a giant chestnut, with wide, gnarled trunk, capable of concealing three men of Merlin’s slender figure. He immediately decided to reach this; but it was necessary, first, to draw the rebel’s fire, and make the transit while he was reloading. Lying flat upon his back, and holding his hat upon a short stick lying conveniently at hand, he very gently raised it until the crown was just above the edge of the log, then suddenly dodged it down as if panic-stricken, and again cautiously raised it. But the rebel sharpshooter was not to be cheated by so old an artifice as this, and shouted indignantly, —

“You needn’t try to come the gum game over this old ’coon, you cussed Yankee!”

“Reckon I ain’t afraid to meet you face to face, if that’s your game,” shouted Merlin in reply, and suddenly sprang to his feet, but at the farther extremity of the log from that where he had shown the hat. As he rose he

made a spring diagonally back, that brought him abreast of the chestnut, and the same instant he was sheltered behind it. The rebel bullet cut the bark from the tree as he disappeared, and the marksman shouted angrily, —

“Yes, you can jump about like a squ’rr’l; but you hain’t got the heart of one, for all your talk.”

Without reply, Merlin, peering round the trunk of his tree, took a rapid aim, and fired at the spot where he supposed his enemy to be hidden, although he could not be certain, as the latter had disappeared to reload.

A contemptuous laugh replied to him.

“Did you see a fox or sumthin’ over there, stranger?” inquired the voice.

Merlin was too busy in reloading to reply. As he drove home the ball, he glanced again toward the thicket, sure that his antagonist would now be taking another aim. His eye caught the gleam of the clouded barrel, and, as the flash blazed from its mouth, Merlin, quick as light, sprang to the other side of the tree, and fired at the spot where the little cloud of smoke was hardly yet beginning to ascend.

A loud cry, succeeded by a stifled groan, told that the hasty aim had been a true one.

Merlin paused to reload his rifle, and then cautiously approached the thicket. Parting the thick underbrush, he discovered his antagonist crouching to the ground and pressing both hands upon his throat, while a spasm of

agony distorted his features. But no sooner did the head of the Kentuckian appear above the bushes, than the fellow, springing to his feet with a pistol in his hand, discharged it full in his face, roaring out, —

“Take that, and go to —, you — Yankee!”

The pistol snapped, but did not explode. Quick as thought descended the breech of Merlin's gun, dashing the weapon from the hands of his enemy, and nearly prostrating him to the earth. With a howl of rage, he drew from his belt a bowie knife, and rushed forward. Dropping his rifle, the Kentuckian snatched a similar weapon from its sheath, and braced himself to receive the attack. So furious was the onset of the rebel, that Merlin's slender figure went down before it, and both men rolled upon the earth, silent now, except for an occasional snarl of rage from the rebel, and the deep-drawn breaths of the other, whose first impulse was to act upon the defensive. Presently, however, a sharp thrill shot through his frame, as the knife of the rebel entered his side, and, failing to reach the heart, glanced along a rib, inflicting a painful, though not dangerous, wound. The sting of this wound, the feeling of his own blood gushing over his hands, the sight of the fell triumph in the face of his enemy, roused at last the sleeping devil in Merlin's heart. The blood rushed to his head, and sung through his brain; a red glare filled his eyes; the same bloodthirsty rage seized upon him that had led him in the hospital to the side of

Judson's bed ; and all thought of self-defence, all lingering instinct of mercy, was swept away before it. With a wild cry, he wrenched his arm out of the rebel's grasp, seized him relentlessly by the throat, and, even while bearing him to the earth, stabbed him to the heart, and repeated the blow again and again, until only a motionless corpse lay beneath him.

Perceiving this at length, the Kentuckian rose to his feet, and wiped his forehead. The frenzy passed away, and he looked gloomily down at the lifeless form so lately full of vigor and animosity.

“ Well, he'd 'a done for me, if I hadn't for him ; but I don't like this business, any way ; it makes a man feel more like a devil than a human.”

Turning the body upon its back, Merlin decently straightened the limbs, and laid the man's own cap over the rigid face, and his rifle at his side.

“ Don't like this privateering. Reckon I'll stop in the ranks, and drop 'em at long range, after this,” muttered he, picking up his own gun, and creeping out of the thicket as stealthily as a murderer might. And through that day, and upon many another stricken field, Harry Merlin fought manfully and well : he ever avoided individual contests ; ever remembered, to his dying day, the look upon that dead man's face as he lay stiffening in the lonely thicket, his heart's blood reddening the grass beneath him.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

MEANWHILE the battle raged with alternating success. Four times the rebels charged with ferocious determination upon the little band of Union men, and as often were repulsed with frightful slaughter. But still no sound denoted that an attack had commenced upon the other side of the camp, and the enemy had evidently been heavily reënforced since the federal spies had reported his numbers. The odds were terrific in favor of the rebels, and only a spirit of chivalrous bravery, and a determination not to desert the comrades who might at any moment come into action, justified the continuance of the combat.

A hurried consultation among the leaders of the division was held. Colonel Blank, heated, blood-stained, and grimly despairing, announced the necessity of falling back.

“There is no sign that Moody and Owens are even within hearing. I have sent out scouts, who can bring no tidings of them. These fellows outnumber us four to one, and have their line of cabins as cover, while we are fully exposed. Our ammunition is nearly expended, and

I see no possibility of continuing the struggle, although I am not used to be the first to cry, 'Enough.' Even now I will head a charge upon those lines, and do the best I may before I am cut down, if you and the men will follow."

"What's to be gained by it? We can't expect to take the place by storm with this handful of men," responded the leader of the Indiana corps.

"Of course not. The only gain would be a very sufficient escort of rebels to the other world. I should be sorry if our fellows did not average three apiece."

"We all know your courage, colonel," interposed the gallant cavalry captain; "but foolhardiness is not courage; and if no more's to be done here, we must make up our minds to withdraw. We have had three hours of it already, and the other division is evidently to be of no use to-day."

"Here they come! We won't run before them! Receive this charge, and when they draw off, I will order the retreat!" exclaimed the colonel, hurriedly; and each officer hastened to sustain his own command.

On came the rebels with shouts and curses. Steady as a rocky shore stood the Union men to receive them. The distance lessened, and yet each withheld his fire — the federals to save their scanty ammunition, the rebels from bravado. A hundred feet alone separated the lines: eyes met the glare of hostile eyeballs, curses and

taunts became articulate, and the blood of the silent Northerners boiled within their veins.

“ Fire ! ”

“ Fire ! ”

And along either line moved a writhing serpent of flame, as a thousand rifles gave up their contents in a breath. Men fell, on either side, as fall the autumn leaves when the north wind smites them in its wrath ; but none quailed. The Union men in their turn charged, with bayonets fixed, and vengeance in their eyes. Resistlessly they bore down upon the rebel line, that faltered, broke, retreated ; and many a traitor fell stabbed in the back as he fled towards the shelter of his camp.

“ Forward, my boys ! Follow them up ! Remember Manassas ! Remember Guyandotte ! Give it them while we have the chance.”

So shouted, at the head of his men, Captain Karl, himself far in advance, his fair hair blowing backward in the keen wind, his blue eyes flashing, his face pallid with excitement, his clinched sword gleaming above his uncovered head.

A hoarse shout of mingled enthusiasm and revenge answered his appeal, as the men dashed forward in his footsteps.

Many of them had shared the disgraceful rout of Manassas ; several had lost their nearest friends in the massacre of Guyandotte ; the rest had heard and read

of the rebel atrocities on both fields; the cool northern blood was stirred to frenzy, and it was not a company of men, but of heroes, who followed the springing lead of that fair young Viking.

The guns were empty, but the keen sabre bayonets remained, and Company Z charged through the rebel line as they might through a hedge of roses.

“Stop, you confounded cowards! Don’t you dare face us on your own ground?” roared Captain Karl, while his men scattered right and left, adroitly cutting off the retreat of their flying foes.

“Who said coward?” cried a deep voice, as a tall young fellow extricated himself from a knot of retreating rebels, and turned to face his taunting pursuer.

“Here’s the man who said it,” contemptuously retorted Captain Karl, aiming a furious blow at the other’s head.

“You’re a liar, then!” shouted the swarthy young rebel, as he adroitly parried the blow with his gun-barrel, and then thrust with his bayonet at the captain’s heart.

A sidelong spring evaded the attack, and the next instant Captain Karl dashed the pommel of his broken sword into the face of his antagonist, and pinioning him with his arms, loudly demanded a surrender.

“I’ll see you — first,” panted the rebel, struggling to reach his knife. But, with a dexterous movement,

Captain Karl laid him prostrate at his feet, and in the same instant, himself snatched the knife from the rebel's belt and holding it to his throat, again offered quarter.

The reply was a movement so sudden and so energetic, that Captain Karl suddenly found himself dragged to the ground, disarmed, and at the mercy of his antagonist, who, with a grim smile, flashed the glittering blade above his head, and with his eye measured its deadly aim.

Too proud to ask for quarter, the young hero looked sternly up at the unrelenting face bent over him, and in his heart bade good by to earth and life. Blood from a deep wound in the rebel's throat dropped down, and plashed upon the face of the Union soldier.

"Coward, am I?" exclaimed the victor. "There's one for that! And here's one for this cut in my throat."

With the first words the knife descended across the captain's cheek; at the next it was poised above his heart, when a piercing voice cried, —

"Tom! Tom Darley! O, stop!"

Without relaxing his grasp, the rebel turned an astonished face towards the direction of the sound.

A tall, slight figure, in a dress half womanly, half soldierly, was flying towards him, with eager eyes, pallid lips, and outstretched arms.

"Dora!" exclaimed he, softly.

"Tom, it's I. Tom, it's your own sister! O, Tom, let him go!"

Her arms were tight about his neck, her face pressed close to his, her gasping appeal sobbing in his ear, —

“O, Tom, if you kill him, you’ll kill me.”

“Dora! Why, how came you here?”

“Move! move off his chest. Tom, you’ve killed him; you’ve killed my own dear Captain Karl!”

“Here, you reb, you’re my prisoner. What’s this! Killed our captain? Wish’t I’d shot you in the first place. Run to the woods, Miss Dora, and send out a couple of men for his body. I’ll bring on this —”

“No, no! we’ll bring him now. Tom, you’ll help, — won’t you? For my sake, Tom; and you’ll promise not to escape till we get to the ambulance — won’t you? He’s my brother, Simpson!”

“Your brother, miss? More’s the pity,” said the soldier, bluntly. “Well, catch hold there, if you’re going to, lad, and keep your parole, if you don’t want to find what’s inside this six-shooter of mine. It’s loaded, I promise you. I guess, by the looks of your neck, though, you don’t feel very spry.”

Tom, whose warlike mood had received a check in the sudden appearance of his sister, and who was also somewhat faint from the profuse bleeding of the wound in his throat, gave a sullen promise to make no attempt to escape; and the two men, raising the inanimate body of the young captain, bore it hurriedly to the shelter of the woods. Already the leaders of the different com-

mands were rallying them for the retreat, and Dora had barely time to make sure that life yet lingered in the frame of her wounded hero, when he was again raised between two men, and borne down the mountain side to the ambulance.

Repressing her own inclination to follow him, Dora devoted herself to searching the tangled thickets of the wood for wounded sufferers who were likely to be overlooked, giving them refreshment and comfort, and summoning to their aid some one of the parties detailed to carry away the wounded and dead. Many a fainting soldier of the Union, many a helpless sufferer, owed his life that day to the exertions of the bright-eyed girl, who heeded no danger, shunned no fatigue, nerved herself to endure all fearful sights, that she might fulfil the noble duty she had undertaken.

She was still bending over a poor boy mortally wounded in the breast, to whose dying lips she held the water they so madly craved, when Mr. Brown stood beside her, and laid a hand upon her head.

“Dora, why did you leave the spot where I placed you? I have been very anxious,” said he, with tender severity.

“I saw men lying wounded nearer the enemy, and I went to give them help. O, Mr. Brown! This poor boy!”

“He is dying. Let me hold his head. Do not look at him.”

Softly laying the poor convulsed frame upon the turf, the chaplain knelt beside it, praying fervently and silently for the brave young spirit, that each thro' set free, and, when all was over, beckoned to a party of ambulance men, who would carry it away for Christian sepulture. Then taking Dora's hand, he led her away.

“You saw wounded men; but I told you to remain in safety where you were until I gave you permission to go to them. I went forward to see if the enemy persisted in his attack at that point, because, if so, I would not have you put yourself in the way. When I came back you were gone; and much of the good that I might have done to-day has gone undone, because I was seeking for you.”

“That was wrong, I think,” said Dora, abstractedly.

“What was wrong?”

“To be looking for me instead of helping the wounded soldiers. It wasn't half so much matter for one girl as for hundreds of men.”

“Dora, it was more matter to me what had become of you, than the fate of both armies together,” said the chaplain, impetuously.

Dora looked up with astonishment at the noble face bent towards her, the traces of strong emotion on all its lineaments, tear-drops actually glistening in the eyes.

“I didn’t know you cared so much about me, sir,” said she, simply.

“I care more than you think,” replied the chaplain, recovering with an effort his usual manner.

“Now tell me how it happened that you disobeyed me so entirely; for I hear that you were seen in the very heart of the battle.”

“I went forward a little from the rock where you left me, to carry drink to some men wounded by a cannon-ball, not a great way from me. Then I saw others, a great many others, and I went to them all, and then filled my cask again at a brook I found. Then I was going back, and I heard a great shouting among the rebels, and knew they were coming on, and I wanted to see the charge; so I ran forward to the top of a little hill, just behind our men. I kept behind a tree, — indeed, I did, sir, — and was very careful, till all at once I saw Captain Karl dashing forward at the head of his company; and he looked so glorious, sir! O, I think not one of those knights of the Round Table ever looked more knightly! And the men rushed after him, and went right through the rebels, scattering them every way. Then they all broke up, and fought in little groups of two and three together, and Captain Karl —”

“Always that boy!” muttered the chaplain.

“He chased after the rebels,” pursued Dora, without heeding the exclamation. “and all at once one of them

turned round, and faced him. Mr. Brown, *it was my brother Tom!*”

“Well, what then?”

“Then they fought. I don’t know about that part, for I felt so; and I set out to run and stop them; but it seemed as if a cannon-ball was tied to each of my feet. I was so very, very eager to get there in time, I could hardly stir. But I did get there: I got there just as Tom had lifted his arm; and Captain Karl lay quite still; and in the next minute the knife would have come down — O, Mr. Brown, I can’t tell any more.”

Wrenching her hand out of the chaplain’s grasp, Dora hurried on before him; nor did he again see her face until they reached the ambulance train, where the *vivandière* found immediate and full employment.

Captain Karl, with his wounds dressed, and sitting upright, greeted his little friend after his usual merry fashion.

“Dora Darling, is it you? Next time I’m attacked, I shall sing out, not, ‘I’ll tell my big brother,’ but, ‘I’ll tell my little sister.’ Did any one ever see such a spooney fellow as I am, though? The minute I’m hurt, I faint just like a girl. A girl, though! I wish to Heaven most of the men I know had your pluck, Dora — girl though you are!”

“You’re not badly hurt, then, after all?” asked Dora, anxiously. “I thought you were killed at first.”

“Thank you. You took it coolly enough, then. What has become of that big ruffian you picked off of me? I

was just going when you came up, and couldn't see what way you pitched in : all I knew was, that it was you, and that I was sure of protection. You've no idea what a relief I found it, to be able to drop off comfortably, leaving my affairs in such good hands."

Dora could not respond to the laugh that rang so merrily from the captain's pale lips.

"It was my brother that you were fighting with," said she, gravely.

"Your brother! Why, Dora Darling, I'm ever so glad neither of us killed the other, it would have made you feel so sorry."

Dora looked at him without reply for a moment, then briefly said, —

"You don't know much about it, Captain Karl. Now I'm going to see Tom."

But Dora found her brother sullen, and disinclined for conversation. He was much chagrined at being taken prisoner, declaring that he would rather have been shot upon the field. The wound in his throat was deep and painful, and the bruise lent him by the pummel of the captain's sword had resulted in a racking headache. Altogether, Tom was very poor company ; and Dora, after vainly trying to render him more comfortable, was fain to offer her services elsewhere.

The first division, exhausted, dispirited, and without ammunition, were now re-formed in column, ready for

retreat, when a scattering fire, upon the crest of the mountain, announced that the comrades whose failure to coöperate with them had, as all felt, lost the day to the Union forces, were at last engaged single-handed with the enemy.

To help them was now impossible, and an order was despatched to their comrades intimating that retreat was the only course left open to either division. This counsel, so repugnant to the hearts of the brave leaders, was not immediately followed; but, after a dodging, unsatisfactory engagement of several hours, it was seen to be the inevitable termination of the affair; and the second division sullenly and reluctantly drew off the bloody field, bringing their dead and wounded with them, and leaving traces of their prowess in many a rebel corpse, or maimed and wounded sufferer.

At noon the whole force was again in motion, and, some hours later, reëntered their own works, neither jubilant nor despairing; for, although the Stars and Bars still waved over Camp Baldwin, the number of its defenders had been considerably lessened by that morning's work, and the Union soldiers had for seven hours sustained a close combat with an enemy outnumbering them as three to one. Indeed, as Sergeant Brazer pithily observed, —

“It might have been better, and it might have been worse; but if fighting's a man's trade, he can't have too much of it, whichever way it turns.”

CHAPTER XXXIV.

CAPTAIN WINDSOR and Tom Darley were both placed in the hospital, although in different divisions, and Dora paid assiduous attention to both.

The captain's wounds were, in themselves, slight; but his constitution, more nervous than enduring; had become seriously impaired from the effects of his former wounds, and from the exposure and fatigue which he delighted to share with the hardiest of his men. He was, therefore, earnestly recommended by the surgeon, and by Colonel Blank, to accept a furlough, and go home to be nursed back to health and strength.

This advice the captain received with unalloyed disgust, and only consented to think seriously of it on finding that he gained no strength under hospital treatment, but, in fact, declined from day to day.

"You must be gone from here before winter fairly sets in, or they'll leave your bones on this mountain, my lad," was the surgeon's parting counsel at the end of a long conversation with his patient.

Captain Karl lay silent for some time, and then called to Dora, —

“Come here, darling, and tell me what I’m to do. I’ve got to be such a worthless fellow, they won’t keep me here any longer, even with you to back me up. The doctor says I must go home, and the colonel threatens to send me as a prisoner if I won’t go on my own accord. They say I’ll die here.”

“O, then, go, do go, as soon as you can, dear Captain Karl.”

“I’ll go fast enough. You needn’t be in such a hurry to be rid of me; and please don’t frighten me out of my senses with that indignant look, because I’ve something to say. I’m not fit to travel alone any more than a baby — now, am I? Suppose the horses were to run away, or the cars smash up, or some one leave a window open on my back; and how under the sun could I tell how much sugar I like in my tea?”

Dora smiled faintly.

“Your servant is a smart fellow — isn’t he?”

“Well enough. But I want some one who knows more than any servant — more than I do myself. Dora Darling, if I can’t have you to go with me, I’ll stay here and die, and then I’ll haunt you every night.”

Dora stared at him speechlessly.

“Me!” exclaimed she.

“Certainly; why not? I’ve always meant to take you home with me, when I went, for a present to my mother and sister. The only trouble I foresee is, that,

if it is a possible thing to do it, they will spoil you out and out; or, failing in that, will kill you with kindness. However, we must risk it."

"Please tell me seriously what you mean, Captain Karl."

"Well, then, seriously, Dora, I mean to ask you to go home to my dear good mother, to be another daughter to her, and a sister to Marnie and me for the rest of your natural life. It is the warmest wish of my heart, Dora Darling, and I think, possibly enough, may make the difference of life and death to me upon my journey."

"But your mother don't know—"

"Don't she, though? Haven't I told her all about you, and about your going foraging with me the other day, and about your ways with the men, and all? and didn't she say in her very last letter that I was to do as seemed best to myself about bringing you home, and that if I adopted you as my sister, you should be a daughter to her? Now, then, Miss-Sceptic!"

"Did she really and truly say that?" asked Dora, flushing all over, as a sudden vision of a home, a mother, a sister, and her dear Captain Karl for a brother, rose before her mental vision.

"Really and truly, dear little Do," said the young soldier, tenderly. "And now promise to be ready to go with me, and then I'll be off to sleep—I'm so tired talking."

“I oughtn’t to have let you,” said Dora, with much concern. “Don’t say one word more, but shut your eyes, and I will smooth your hair till you sleep. We will talk about the rest after you wake up. I must think about it, and talk with Mr. Brown before I can make up my mind. Only I will tell you now how very, very kind I think it of you and your dear mother to want to have me come; and I shall never forget it as long as I live. There, I shan’t speak again, nor you mustn’t.”

“Sing, then,” murmured the young man; and the sweet girl voice softly crooned a lullaby until the fevered lips of the invalid parted in the smile of a happy dream, and his little nurse, screening his eyes from the light, crept softly away, to think of what he had said.

In the outer tent she met the chaplain.

“Mr. Brown, I should like so much to talk with you a little.”

“Come, then. I was just looking for you, to propose a walk. It is cold, but it will do you good.”

“Thank you, sir. Wait a moment, please, till I get my cloak and cap.”

A few moments later found teacher and pupil briskly walking along the outer line of fortification, in their progress around the camp.

“Captain Karl is going home,” began Dora, abruptly, as she found her companion waiting for her to begin the conversation.

"I am glad to hear it," said Mr. Brown, heartily.

Dora paused a little.

"Why, sir?" asked she, at length.

"Because it is the best thing he can do for himself, and I shall feel easier as to your safety. He is always leading you into danger."

"I don't think you like Captain Karl as well as he deserves, Mr. Brown," said Dora, impetuously.

"Don't you, indeed? And are you so much better judge than I of what he deserves?" asked the chaplain, coldly.

"Yes, sir, I think I am."

"Dora, you are in danger of becoming self-conceited, and a little too free in criticising the conduct and judgment of those older than yourself," said Mr. Brown, severely.

"I am sorry you think so, sir; but you asked me if I knew better about Captain Karl than you, and I thought I did. Shouldn't I answer truly?"

"Why, yes. But you shouldn't think so."

"I heard you say once, sir, that free thought was more precious than free speech," said Dora, demurely.

The chaplain bit his lip.

"Well, tell me how it is you have formed so much juster an estimate of Captain Windsor's character than I have been able to."

"I think, sir, it is because I like him. And besides I

think he feels as if you expected people to — to look up to you, and speak differently from what young men generally do to each other, and so he feels more like talking in his wild way than ever." Then I think you don't like it that he isn't more careful, and treats you just as he does Captain Hunt, or any of the rest of them; and so you both keep feeling wrong when you are together, and so don't like each other."

"You're making me out rather a prig, Dora," said the chaplain, smiling, and coloring a little.

"I don't know what that is, sir. But I wish you liked Captain Karl better, because I like you both so much, and want to have you friends."

"Well, we won't say any more about it now. What were you going to tell me?"

"Why, it was about him, sir. He is going home, and he wants me to go with him, and he his sister. His mother has written to give him leave to bring me, and he says perhaps he won't live unless he has me to take care of him."

"Go home with him, to remain always?" exclaimed the chaplain, stopping short, and looking at Dora in a terrified sort of way.

"Yes, sir. His mother to be my mother, and his sister my sister."

"And he —?"

"Why, he would be my brother."

“And you, Dora, what is your own inclination in the matter?”

“I should like so much to go, sir — to have a home and family again; and I know I should love them all! But how can I leave the soldiers? I am the daughter of the regiment, and if I can do it any good, I have no more right to leave it than the colonel has. Isn't it so, Mr. Brown?”

“Yes, dear child, it is so. And you can do — you are doing — inconceivable good among these men. My influence, indeed, is secondary to your own. It would be a cruel loss, a wicked deprivation to them, for you to go away.”

He paused, too much agitated to say more. Dora walked by his side a few moments in silence, and then said, quietly, —

“If it is so, I will stay.”

“And not the men alone, Dora. I — what should I do without my dear little friend, my scholar, my right hand in all good works that I have done here? You will not leave me, Dora?”

“O, Mr. Brown, am I all that?”

“All that, and more, Dora Darling; far more than I can tell you now. I never thought of your leaving us, or I would have spoken sooner; but I, too, have my plan for you — a plan that has been maturing in my mind for many weeks. I have no mother to take you to, no sister

to offer you as a companion ; but I myself, Dora, will be to you brother, father, guardian, all that a man may be to the most precious charge God could give him, if only you will let me. My home, as I have told you, is in a little village of Ohio. My parishioners allowed me to leave them for this service at my earnest request, but they expect me back to live among them for life. There is an excellent woman, a woman who has been to me like a mother, among them. In her charge I will place you for a while, and I myself will watch over and educate you. I will develop the strong, pure nature that God has given you. I will train you to such womanhood as the world has seldom witnessed. Dora, I startle you with my vehemence, but you cannot yet understand how this plan has become a part of my whole future. I have been thinking of it day and night for weeks, and only waited for a quiet hour to tell you of it. Dora, you will not disappoint me so bitterly ? ”

The chaplain uttered the last words imploringly, and seizing Dora's hands, stood looking eagerly into her face. But Dora did not raise her eyes to his. Her lips were compressed, and her face was very pale. It was a crisis in her life, and she felt it painfully. At last she drew away her hands, and said sorrowfully,—

“ You are both so very good to me ! and how can I bear to say no to either ? ”

“ Surely, Dora, you cannot esteem this thoughtless lad

as safe or true a guardian for you, as I?" asked the chaplain, bitterly.

"No, sir. You would do me a great deal more good than he could. But I think I could do him more good than I could you."

"That, Dora, is not for you to know. Some day you will understand better what I cannot now explain."

"Please, sir, let us not talk any more about it now. I will think of it to-night, and to-morrow I can tell better, perhaps."

"Very well, dear child. Pray for guidance, and it will be given you."

"I shall, sir," said Dora, softly.

"Good night, then."

"Good night, sir. O, Mr. Brown, you know Pictor must go with me wherever I go. I have the care of him."

The chaplain smiled.

"Yes, indeed," said he. "That is understood."

CHAPTER XXXV.

WHEN Dora returned to the hospital, she found her brother impatiently awaiting her.

“Come into your own tent, Dora,” said he, in a low voice. “I have something to tell you.”

“Go in and wait for me, Tom. I must just look round the hospital first. I am glad you are so much better to-day; but you must go to bed as soon as you have done talking to me.”

“Make haste, Do. That’s a good girl.”

In about half an hour, the *vivandière*, having finished her rounds, entered her own quarters, where she found her brother impatiently awaiting her.

“What a time you have been!” exclaimed he. “But now sit down here and listen, for you’ve got to help me, somehow or other.”

“Well, Tom, tell me how.”

“Why, I’ve just heard that a lot of us are to be sent off to-morrow to Columbus to be put in jail, or sent to some of those northern forts, and die of fever and starving, like so many niggers in a slave-pen,” exclaimed Tom, vehemently, although in a low voice.

“O, Tom! And you are one of them?”

“Yes. I’m well enough to be discharged from the hospital, and prison’s the next thing for me. But, Dora, I’ll die first. Sooner than go to rot in one of those northern jails, I’ll shoot myself.”

“Don’t, Tom, don’t talk so.”

“I feel so, any way; but if I can escape, I shan’t need to do either.”

Dora said nothing, but looked very serious.

“Yes,” continued Tom, glancing keenly at her, “I know it’s bad for you in one way to help me off; but in another way it’s your duty. You was my sister long enough before either of us even heard of rebels or Union men. You wouldn’t sacrifice your own flesh and blood to a notion — would you, Dora?”

“O, Tom, don’t call it a notion. Yes, I would willingly give my own life to do good to the Union side; but to give yours —”

“Yes, that’s just it,” broke in Tom, eagerly. “If you don’t help me off, it’s just the same as if you gave up my life; for I swear I’ll kill myself sooner than go to jail.”

“Tom, you are very wicked to say so.”

“You’ll find I’ll be wicked enough to do it, as well as say it,” retorted her brother, doggedly.

“But, Tom, I am trusted with everything. They all know that I am as loyal as a true-born Northerner, and I

am never watched nor questioned. How can I be so mean as to betray such trust?"

"That's the very thing that makes it easy for you. You could help me off, and never be suspected. Now, I dare say you know the pass-word for to-night—don't you?"

"Yes; and I would no more make a bad use of it than I would kill myself."

"Or me?"

"Tom, don't try me so!"

"Remember, Dora, that mother told you never to forget that you and I were all she had, and to hold together through life, whatever happened."

"But, Tom, mother was no rebel, nor she didn't want you to be."

"And if she was here to-night, would she tell you to kill me because I have been one?" asked Tom, bitterly.

"If she were here! O, mother, if only you were here!" moaned Dora, sinking on her knees beside the bed, and hiding her face.

"But she isn't; and I have neither mother nor sister to save me from destruction. Well, it will be over soon."

And Tom was moodily leaving the tent, when Dora called him back.

"Wait, Tom, wait. I can't tell yet; but you mustn't leave me so. Tell me, if you go, will you join the rebel army again?"

“ Yes, I suppose so,” said the lad, sullenly.

“ Then I have no right, if you were twice my brother, to set you free. But, Tom, if you will promise me sacredly, if you will call mother to listen to your promise, never to fight against the Union, but to go North, and find some quiet work, and wait there till I come, or if you will enter our army — ”

“ That I won't do ! ” hastily interposed Tom. “ I'm no turncoat, and ain't going to sell one kind of liberty to get another.”

“ Well, will you do the first, if I will help you off ? ”

“ Will you help me off, if I will ? ”

“ Yes, Tom, I will,” said Dora, in a very low voice.

“ All right. I'll agree ; and no one need ever know that you had any hand in the matter.”

“ I will see to myself, Tom. You needn't think again about that,” said his sister, sadly. “ Now tell me what your plan is.”

“ Why, it *was* just to get out of this camp, and then to strike for Monterey, or Camp Baldwin. But you say I'm to go North.”

“ Yes, you've got to promise that.”

“ Well, then, you must settle where I'm to head for. I don't know anything about it.”

Dora remained a few minutes buried in gloomy reflection.

“ O, Tom,” said she, at length, “ you have need to

make good use of your life after this, for I am giving my own for it."

"How! What do you mean, Do?"

"No matter. I don't want to make much of it, only to make you feel that you ought to do right after you get your liberty."

"I will, Dora. I promise to do just as you'd like to have me," said Tom, earnestly.

"Then wait here while I go and see some one. Be patient; I will come as soon as I can."

"All right. I'll wait."

Softly leaving the tent, Dora entered the hospital, and silently moved through the ranks of sleeping men, until she reached Captain Karl's bed, placed by itself at the upper end. As she had expected, he was awake, waiting for her to bid him good night.

"Captain Karl," said Dora, sitting down close to his pillow, "you said that you would be my brother if I came to live with you."

"So I did, darling. What then?"

"That shows that you are willing to do a great deal for me."

"And so I am — a great deal."

"Well, then, what I am going to ask is, will you do it in another way?"

"Do it? Do what, you little Sphinx?"

"Show that you love me as well as if you were my brother."

“Explain, Dora. I don’t know what you are driving at,” demanded Captain Karl, uneasily.

“I am going to ask a very, very great favor of you; and if you will grant it, instead of all you offered me just now, I will be so grateful!”

“Speak out, mouse. It’ll have to be a hard matter that I won’t undertake to please you.”

“It is a hard matter — a very hard matter. Captain Karl, my brother Tom is a prisoner here, you know.”

“Yes.”

“And they are going to send him away with some others, to-morrow, to be put in prison.”

“I know, Dora. I’m real sorry for you —”

“Wait a minute, please. Tom hates to go so, you can’t think; he says he’ll die first, and I know he’ll do what he says. He must escape, and you must help him.”

“I help him! I’ll be hanged if I do!” exclaimed the captain, indignantly.

“I didn’t mean actually help him to escape, but help him after he gets North,” said Dora, timidly.

“North! What’s he going North for?”

“I told him, if I helped him off, he must promise never to fight against the Union any more, but to stay at the North and work there until I came. But he doesn’t know where to go, or what to do; he has no friends, and no money, and I have none to give him; but I thought per-

naps you would help him for my sake, and instead of helping me.”

“I wasn’t proposing to help you, as you call it, out of benevolence, but because I want you, for my own sake, to live in my home,” said the captain, in rather an annoyed tone.

“But if you care so much as that for me, you ought to care a little for my only brother,” said Dora, naively.

“Especially since he introduced himself to me so amiably the other day,” suggested the captain. “However, that’s neither here nor there. I bear no malice, and hope he don’t; and as for helping him with money, he’s as welcome to what I can spare as he is to the free air of the North. But I can’t do anything more, Dora, I am really afraid. And as for your changing your plan of coming home with me, I won’t listen to it. Your proposed bargain is a very comical one, to say the least. You ask me to turn traitor to my country by helping off a prisoner of war, and, as a reward, you promise to deprive me of the one thing I’m determined not to do without.”

“But money is not enough, Captain Karl,” persisted Dora. “You must tell him where to go, and give him a letter to some one who will set him to work. I don’t want him idling round, and getting into mischief.”

‘You wise little woman! You’re fifty if you’re a

day. If this precious brother had half your sense, he wouldn't be where he is to-day."

"Will you, Captain Karl?"

"Will I what, fair Pertinacity, as Sir Percie Shafton would style you?"

"Will you give him a letter to some friend of yours, and tell him where to go?"

"Why, Do, that's aiding and abetting his escape. I can't, child, with any show of honor."

"Dear, dear, what shall I do? No one will help me, and I can't do it all alone!" exclaimed the poor girl, hiding her face upon the pillow.

"Now, darling, don't speak that way, and don't, for Heaven's sake, lose your courage and coolness. If you do you will destroy my pet ideal."

Dora raised her head.

"I don't know what you mean, Captain Karl; but since you cannot help me, I won't disturb you any longer. Good night, sir."

"Good! Now we have Joan of Arc again. Stop a minute. If I help you in this matter, will you promise, sure and fast, to go with me next week?"

"No, Captain Karl."

"No? Well, that's cool. But you don't say you won't?"

"I don't say anything. It won't be for me to decide."

"For whom then?"

“I’d rather not tell you.”

“Strange girl! Do you wish to go with me?”

“Very much. But perhaps I ought to go somewhere else, and perhaps I shan’t be allowed to do either.”

“Will you tell me what you mean?”

“Not now. Will you help my brother, or not?”

“O, you horrid little vampire! Won’t you be easy till you have dragged the confession from my soul that I can deny you nothing?”

“Then you *will* help him?”

“I’ll help you; and if that is the way you elect, why, that is the way I must follow.”

“Captain Karl, I will never forget it — never.”

“Only mind this. I’ll give you the money, and the direction, and the letter to a friend of mine in Massachusetts, who will place your brother in the way of taking care of himself; but I won’t see him, or have anything more to do with him than just this. I’m a fool and a rascal to do so much; but I do it for you, Dora, and I couldn’t help doing it, if it was worse, when you ask it so earnestly.”

“If I could ever do anything for you, or some one you love, you would find that I know how much this is,” faltered Dora.

“Much or little, I’ll do it for you, little girl.”

“But he must go to-night. They will be sent away to-morrow,” said Dora, uneasily.

“To be sure. Well, here’s my note-book. I will dictate, and you may write a few lines to Mr. ——. Then I have money here. Now listen, and I will tell you exactly the course he must take to get out of the lines, and the route he had best travel afterward.”

Half an hour later Dora returned to her own quarters, with a heart curiously divided between hope and regret, shame and exultation.

She found Tom very uneasy at her prolonged absence, and his joy at the success of her mission was proportionately great. Kissing his sister affectionately, he lavished praise and thanks upon her, and promised in the most solemn manner to obey her wishes, and those of his mother, to the very letter, in the conduct of his future life.

“If you will only remember that, Tom, I shan’t mind,” said Dora, sadly.

“Shan’t mind what, Do?”

“No matter now, Tom.”

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE next morning, when the prisoners were mustered for departure, Thomas Darley was nowhere to be found.

Inquiries and search were of no avail, and the train finally started without him.

That afternoon Colonel Blank was informed, by his orderly, that the *vivandière* requested an interview with him.

“Show her in, Reynolds, immediately. Well, Miss Dora, so you have come to see me. Take a seat.”

“Can I see you alone, sir?” asked Dora, timidly, as she glanced at one or two officers, who were looking at a map upon the table.

“Certainly. Come into this room,” said the colonel, in some surprise, as he raised the flap of the adjoining tent.

“What is it, my dear,” continued he, kindly, seeing that the *vivandière*, pale and agitated, could hardly bring herself to speak.

“Colonel Blank, I have done something wrong, and I have come to tell you of it.”

“I am very sorry for that, Dora,” said the colonel,

gravely, as he placed her upon a seat, and took one himself. "What is your offence?"

"I gave my brother the countersign last night, and I helped him to escape from the hospital."

"You did?"

"Yes, sir."

"Dora, I could not have believed you guilty of such treachery," said the colonel, very severely.

"He was my brother, sir. My mother told us to hold together. He would have died if he had gone to prison."

"If we had known there was a traitor in the camp, we might have guarded against this. How did you get the countersign?"

"I heard one of the men tell another, when I was coming home last night."

"You probably asked it of him."

"I am not a liar, sir."

"I am not so sure of that, after what you tell me," said the colonel, harshly.

"That is because you don't know me, sir," replied Dora, with quiet pride.

"I find, indeed, that I do not know you. I thought you were to be trusted anywhere, and with any charge. I find I have mistaken you entirely.

"Why have you come here now?" continued he, after a pause, which Dora had not attempted to break.

"To tell you this, sir."

“Of course. But why do you come to tell me?”

“That you might punish me in any way you think best, sir.”

“Then you acknowledge yourself worthy of punishment?”

“Yes, sir; I intended to bear the penalty when I lid it.”

“What penalty?”

“I don't know, sir. Whatever you choose.”

The colonel paced the length of his tent a dozen times, and then returned to look with a sort of angry relenting at the culprit sitting so motionless, with drooping head and folded hands.

“Where has your brother gone?” asked he.

“Out of the state, sir. He has made a solemn promise never to fight on the rebel side again.”

“To whom?”

“To me, sir.”

“O, you paroled him — did you?”

“Yes, sir,” said Dora, simply.

“And why couldn't he wait, and be paroled by government, or, at the worst, exchanged after a few months?”

“He said it would kill him to be shut up in jail. He has always lived such a free sort of life, I really think it would. And he said he would kill himself before he got there.”

“Poh!” said the colonel, contemptuously.

“You don’t know Tom, sir, any more than you do me. We never, either of us, say what we don’t mean.”

“Well, well. And where is he going, and what is he going to do?”

“I can’t tell anything more about it, sir. I told you that, because I wanted you to know he isn’t a rebel any more. I wouldn’t have let him go if he had been going to fight against us ever again.”

“Are you sure of that?”

“Very sure, sir. I told him so.”

“Well, that makes a difference, to be sure. And you think his word is to be depended on?”

“Yes, indeed, sir.”

“And does no one but you know anything about it?” asked the colonel, sharply.

“If you please, sir, I can’t answer any questions except just about myself.”

“O, then it was a conspiracy!”

“It is I who am the one to be punished, sir.”

“You trust to my good nature. You think I won’t actually take any notice of your offence,” said the colonel, suspiciously.

“No, sir; I expected you would be angrier than you are, and punish me severely.”

“How?”

"I couldn't tell how. Perhaps I should be sent to Columbus, to prison, in my brother's place."

"You deserve it."

"Very likely, sir."

"I think I shall dismiss you from your appointment as *vivandière*. Even though I may excuse you personally, I should not do my duty as an officer to keep a convicted spy and traitor in my camp."

"Spy and traitor!" murmured Dora, in a tone of horror.

"Certainly."

"Not a spy, sir."

"How did you overhear the countersign?"

"Accidentally, upon my word, sir."

"Well, a traitor you certainly are, and you must leave the regiment."

"And will you tell the men I am a traitor and a spy?" asked Dora, raising a face of agony to her stern judge.

"Perhaps."

"O, sir!"

"You said you could bear the penalty."

"I can, sir. Where shall you send me?"

"I shall send you, Dora, to my own home in Ohio, to the care of my wife. This offence of yours is unpardonable in a *vivandière*, but in a warm-hearted little girl it is easily forgiven. Do you understand me, Dora? You

must leave the regiment, but you shall be the daughter of its colonel for the rest of your life. I have intended this for some time."

"But now, sir, when you have just called me those dreadful names —" faltered Dora.

"Perhaps I spoke a little more harshly than I felt, Dora; and I repeat, the same qualities are not essential in a young girl and an army official. I forgive you, and I will conceal your fault from every one. I will not even take measures to discover your accomplices, — for you must have had them, — and I will love you and care for you as a father, as long as you continue to deserve it. Do you accept my offer?"

Had a bomb from Camp Baldwin exploded in his tent, Colonel Blank could not have been more astonished than by the answer of the *vivandière*.

"I thank you very, very much, sir; I do, indeed; but I cannot accept."

"Cannot accept! Upon my word, girl! And why, pray?"

"Don't be angry, sir. I am not ungrateful, but Captain Windsor's mother has sent for me to come and live with her, and Mr. Brown wants very much that I should go home with him."

"And which are you going with?"

"I don't know, sir. I thought, if you was satisfied with only sending me away, I would ask you to be so kind as to advise me."

“But, Dora, I want you myself, and I have written to my wife to say that I should bring you when I came.”

“But the others asked me first, sir.”

“And you had rather go with them?”

“I know them better than I do you, sir,” faltered Dora.

Again the colonel thoughtfully paced the tent. Returning, he laid his hand on Dora’s head.

“I am very sorry, indeed, my child,” said he, kindly, “that I must give up this plan that I have thought so much about; but I will try to be neither selfish nor tyrannical. Go with whichever friend you really think will be the best guardian for you; but remember that, as long as I live, you are my adopted daughter, and I shall always be ready to help or advise you.”

He offered her his hand, and Dora carried it to her lips.

“You are so very, very kind, sir,” murmured she.

“Captain Windsor is going home on sick leave in the course of a few days,” said the colonel, thoughtfully. “You might go with him; or, if you decide to accept Mr. Brown’s invitation, I will stretch a point of discipline, and retain you in your present office until our term of service expires, which will not now be long. What do you decide on doing?”

“May I go or stay, just as I please?”

“Yes, I said so.”

“Then, sir, I think I will go home with Captain Karl, to take care of him on the journey, and while he is sick. Then, when Mr. Brown goes home, if he wants me, really and truly, as much as he said, I will go to him, because he is all alone in the world, just like me, and Captain Karl has his mother and sister.”

“Very sensible. But why did you ask first whether you might go or stay, as you chose?”

“Because, sir,” said the *vivandière*, with quiet pride, “if I had been sent away from here for a punishment, I would not have gone to either of them.”

“Why not? You would have needed their protection all the more.”

“Yes, sir; but I shouldn’t feel right to go in that way. I should feel as if they only took me out of pity, and as if, perhaps, they wouldn’t have, if I had had any other home.”

“And what *would* you have done in that case?”

“I should have taken Picter, and gone to the North by myself, looking for my aunt,” said Dora, confidently.

Colonel Blank looked at the child with mingled admiration and regret.

“I am sorry you won’t say no to both of them, and come home with me,” said he. “You are a very odd girl, with your childish simplicity and your womanly self-respect. You know so little of the world, and yet are so fearless of confronting it!”

“ I am not afraid, because nobody has ever tried to harm me.”

“ Well, my child, go and think over your plans a little, not forgetting that my own offer remains open to you ; and whatever you decide upon, I shall give you every assistance in my power in carrying it out.”

“ Thank you, sir, very much indeed. Good morning.”

“ Good morning, Dora Darling.”

CHAPTER XXXVII.

IN leaving the colonel's tent, Dora encountered Pictor, limping along with a gun over his shoulder.

"I'm glad I met you, Pic," said she, turning and walking along beside him. "I have something to tell you."

"Wha's it?"

"We're going North, Pic — you and I — in the course of a very few days."

"Don' say so, honey! Dat good news, any way. How's we gwine?"

"With Captain Karl. He's going home because he's so poorly, and he wants us to go and take care of him."

"An' is we gwine ter stop dere alluz?" asked Pic, rather coolly.

"No, I suppose not. I don't know yet, Pic, and you musn't say a word about it to any one; but I think very likely, when the regiment goes home, Mr. Brown will want us to come to Ohio, and live with him."

"Dat's it, missy. Dat's de ticket. I goes for libin' long wid de parson. Cap'n Charlie, he mighty funny gen'l'man; de fust rates comp'ny dat eber I seed; but

de parson on'erstan's better. Get a heap ob t'outs out'n 'im ebery time I sees 'im."

"Have you talked much with him, Pieter?" asked Dora, with a suppressed smile.

"Lor', yes, missy. Dat day you fus' 'vised me fer talk wid 'im, he tuck me 'long to he tent, an' 'varsed so sensible an' pooty I felt 's if I'd growd a inch 'fore I lef' 'im. Didn' hab no jokes, an' kin' o' makin' fun way, wid 'im, like Cap'n Charlie, but jes' talk right off ser'ous, same's he'd talk to a w'ite gen'l'man. Made ole nigger feel's ef he wor some 'count in de worl', arter all."

"But what did he talk about?"

"'Bout hebenly matters, mos'ly, missy. Gib me some new idees; tell yer, he did dat, honey."

"And you've talked since with him?"

"Lots o' times. He alluz jes' so patien' an' good-natured, neber makin' fun, nor showin' off he buckra ways on pore ole darkey, dat don' know noffin'. Knows w'en he's treated right, dough, jes' as well as a lighter complected feller."

Dora's face glowed.

"Yes, Mr. Brown is a different man from the rest of the world," said she, softly.

"No truer word dan dat in de Bible, missy. Reckon he's he one dat'll sign de pass for bof ob us ter trabel de dark road. Satan's paterole can' tech us, ef we gits a line from 'im fer pertection."

“Yes, Pic, you are right,” said Dora, thoughtfully
“To live with him will be the wisest, but the merriest
would be Captain Karl’s home.”

“Merry ’nough,” grunted Pic. “So’s de cracklin’ o’
thorns underneaf de pot merry ’nough ; bud fer good stid-
dy fire ter cook yer vittles, or warm yer berry heart to
de middle, gib me good solid oak. Now, dat ar’s de
parson.”

“Heart of oak,” murmured Dora.

“Well, missy, I’s all ready w’en you is. ’Spec’s I’ll
see yer ag’in to-night or ’morrer mornin’. I’s gwine out
in de woods a piece. jes’ now, an’ll say, Mornin’, fer
’twon’t do ter let de scouts get ’noder crack at yore lilly
head.”

“Where are you going, Pic?”

“O, jes’ out here a piece. Mornin’, missy.”

“Good morning, Pic,” said Dora, dubiously ; for she
recognized in the eye of her old retainer a certain gleam
that, experience warned her, foreboded mischief.

Returning to the hospital, she found Captain Karl
dressed for the day, and impatiently awaiting her ap-
pearance. He was about to return to his own quarters,
having hitherto preferred the hospital, that he might
enjoy Dora’s nursing. Now, however, the surgeon
insisted that purer air, and more quiet, would be his
best remedies, until he could set out upon his home-
ward journey ; and he only awaited Dora’s return to

bid her good by, or, rather, to solicit her company to his quarters.

“Just to make it seem a bit cheerful at first,” pleaded he. “And you must stay with me all you can. No one else needs you as I do,” added he, somewhat querulously. “Now, tell me, if you have got through your mysteries, are you going home with me? because, if not, I’ve made up my mind not to go myself.”

“Wait till we get settled in your own quarters, and then I will tell you all about it,” said Dora, smilingly, as she busied herself in wrapping the invalid from the keen air he was about to encounter.

Having seen him comfortably disposed upon his own bed, and having dismissed the nurse and servant who had supported him during the short walk, Dora sat down beside her patient, and while gently caressing his hair with her fingers, told him all the incidents of the morning, and her own decision as to her future movements.

“You’re a darling Dora, as well as a Dora Darling,” said the captain, putting the little hand to his lips. “I began to be afraid you were going to slip through my fingers, somehow, though you wouldn’t have found it an easy matter to accomplish, I can tell you. As for your going to the parson by and by, that’s all bosh. Once under my mother’s roof, it’ll be a hard fight to get away again, you’ll find. However, we needn’t bother about that now. And so the old man thought to play

judge after the fashion of the fox with the crows— did he?”

“How was that?”

“Don’t you know? Why, they were quarrelling over a bit of cheese, and referred the matter to the fox, who settled it at once by gobbling up the cheese, just as the colonel wanted to gobble you.”

“But whichever crow gets it will gobble it all the same; so the poor cheese is lost, any way,” suggested Dora, archly.

“Yes, swallowed down, appropriated, assimilated, what you will; you may be sure the crow known as Captain Karl is too wise a bird to let go, once he has his clutches on you.”

“Well, now I am going to find Mr. Brown, and tell him. Perhaps I shall come to see you again, after dinner.”

“Bother Mr. Brown! Stay here; I want you—”

But Dora, with a merry nod, was already gone; and the captain, after a good-natured growl of disappointment, had no alternative but to lie and think of a certain little secret of his own, and the happy days awaiting them both at home, until he fell fast asleep, and continued his air castles in his dreams.

Dora, meantime, found the chaplain in his tent, and after confiding to him the story of her brother’s evasion, that she might not escape whatever censure her share in

it might elicit from him, she repeated her conversation with the colonel, and her own decision.

Mr. Brown listened attentively, and when she had done, said,—

“You have done well, Dora. I say nothing of your connivance at your brother’s escape. As you are to leave the army at once, it is not worth while to insist upon questions of army discipline; and your future life will not probably bring a similar emergency. Your proposition to accompany Captain Windsor home is humane and wise; for, with Colonel Blank’s ideas upon this matter, I should not feel it advisable to retain you in his camp. But remember, Dora, that you promise to come to me whenever I am again at home, and at liberty to devote myself as I would wish to your education. I shall not say now how much that promise is to me, nor how much I build upon it; but remember that it is a promise.”

“Yes, sir, it is a promise,” said Dora, with a little solemn air that brought a smile to the grave face of her companion.

“I see that you feel its weight,” said he. “And now run away; for I am busy with my sermon.”

Late that night Dora was aroused from deep slumber by a scratching on the outside of her tent. Starting up, she exclaimed,—

“Who’s that? What’s the matter?”

“’Sh, missy. ’Tain’t no one but ole Pic. T’out I jes’ stop an’ tell yer he’m done fer.”

“Who’s done for? What do you mean, Pic?”

“De Bony party, missy. He done fer, shore, dis time.”

“What, killed?”

“Reckon he’s dat, missy. Heern tell wid one ob our scouts he wor ’long wid a picket, ’bout half way from here to de place whar de rebs is. So I t’out I’d bes’ go an’ exercute dat jus’ice dat I got disapp’inted ov t’oder time, ’specially as I reck’nd we’d be movin’ ’fore long. So I tuck de ole rifle an’ jogged along inter de woods a piece, foun’ our own pickets, got d’rections whar de rebs was, crep’ up, an’ shore ’nough, seed dat feller skinnin’ a rabbit ’fore de fire, innercent as a turkle dub. T’out I’d wait till ’e got de rabbit skun, ’cause dey say onfinished work ha’nts yer in t’oder worl’, an’ as he rips it off an’ frows it down, I jes’ squints ’long de bar’l, pull ’e trigger, an’ golly, missy, it’d do yer good fer see dat feller kick.”

“Did you really shoot him, Picter?”

“No two ways, ’bout it, missy. Jus’ice am exercuted dis time, shore, an’ so’s de nigger.”

“Picter, I am very much shocked, and very angry, too. It was murder, and nothing else. Go away, directly, and in the morning tell Mr. Brown about it, and see what he will say,” exclaimed Dora, indignantly.

“Now, honey, chile, don’ ’e talk dat ar way to poor ole uncle,” began Pic, soothingly; but Dora interrupted him.

“No, don’t say any more. I don’t like you, Pictor, and I don’t want to talk any longer. I’m going to sleep, and shan’t answer again, whatever you say.”

“Ain’t no use sayin’ noffin’, den,” retorted Pic, offended in his turn, and with no further attempt at conversation, he withdrew to his own quarters; nor did Dora again see him until the morning of their departure for the North.

But neither then, nor at any subsequent period, did either allude to this, the subject of their only disagreement; nor did Pic think it necessary to obey the recommendation of his young mistress, to submit his course for judgment to the chaplain.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

It is now necessary to pass in silence over the space of several weeks, leaving to the imagination of the reader the demonstrations of love and regret offered by the brave boys of the Ohio Twenty—to their “daughter,” who, in bidding them farewell, assured each in turn that she should never forget her relation to the regiment, nor consider it severed, as long as she lived; and each one was invited to call upon her for service, or remembrance, whenever he might find it pleasant to do so.

To the same vivid imagination must also be left the incidents of the long journey between Cheat Mountain summit and the quiet village in Massachusetts where Captain Windsor’s mother and sister awaited his return, and cordially welcomed his adopted sister for his sake.

But of matters subsequent to her arrival at Mrs. Windsor’s home, we will let Dora speak for herself, in an extract from a long letter written by her to Mr. Brown, directly after becoming settled in her new abode.

After detailing the journey, and speaking of Captain Karl’s renovated health she goes on to say, —

“And now, Mr. Brown, I am going to tell you something so surprising, that I can hardly believe it myself. Only think of Captain Karl’s mother being my own dear mother’s sister, the very aunt Lucy that I have so long wanted to find! And only think, too, that Charlie (that’s what we call Captain Karl almost always here) knew all the time, or suspected, at least; because, when he wrote to his mother about me, and said my name was Dora Darling, she wrote back word that her sister married a man named Darley, and told him to inquire if it wasn’t the same name. Then he took up my little Bible one day, when I had been reading to him, and saw mother’s name, ‘Mary Lee,’ written in it; and his own mother’s name was Lucy Lee; so he knew then right off. But he made believe to his mother that he didn’t know; and he never said a word to me; but he says, if I had concluded not to go with him, he should have told me, though he didn’t want to, because he wanted to surprise us both.

“And sure enough we were surprised, when, pretty soon after we got home, Charlie asked me for my Bible, and gave it to his mother, and asked her if ever she saw it before. Aunt Lucy turned just as pale,—you can’t think how pale,—and looked in a sort of wild way at him and at me!

“Then Charley nodded his head and laughed (I think he laughed so as to keep from crying), and said,—

“‘All right, mother. Dora is the daughter of the

Mary Lee who owned that book before she married Mr. Darley.'

"Then aunt Lucy hugged me and kissed me so much! and she cried; but I was too much amazed to cry, and Marnie — that's Charley's sister — hugged me and kissed me too; and O, Mr. Brown, I was so happy, so dreadfully happy, it seemed as if my heart would break.

"And now we are all getting used to each other, and quieting down a little, it is still pleasanter, and I am to go to school with Marnie directly.

"But, dear Mr. Brown, they won't hear a word about my going to live with you; and aunt Lucy says you must get a parish here instead, or, at any rate, must come and make us a nice long visit as soon as your time in the army is out. Please do come, and we will talk about it then. I haven't forgotten that I promised to come, if you wanted me; and I shall do whatever you think best, after you have talked with aunt Lucy.

"Pictet lives here; and he is to have a little house, and take care of our garden, and work for other people when he wants to. But we shall always take care of him, of course. He is very happy, and sends his 'spec's to Mas'r Brown,' with a great many wishes to see and hear you talk again.

"My brother Tom has been placed on a farm in the western part of this state, and is doing very well indeed there; but I think he wants to go into the army again,

on the right side this time. I hope he will make up his mind to do so. It makes me feel a little bad that Charley doesn't want to have me see Tom often, and doesn't want him to live any nearer us. I know, now, one of the reasons he was so unwilling to help him come North. He doesn't like him a bit, and I am so sorry!

"And now, dear Mr. Brown, I must say good by. Please give my love to Colonel Blank, and tell him about my new friends. And give my love to all the men, please, when they come together Sunday afternoon to hear you read. I miss doing that very much, though I am going to have a Sunday school class. But it seems very small and still here, after the camp. Good by, dear Mr. Brown.

"I am your affectionate daughter,

"DORA."

As the chaplain finished reading this letter, and placed it carefully away, he smiled a smile of tender determination.

"I won't be robbed of my ewe lamb by any claim of kindred, or custom," said he, softly. "She shall come to me yet, of her own free will, and no man shall put us asunder."

THE END.

